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CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

ISSUE 45 OCTOBER 1987

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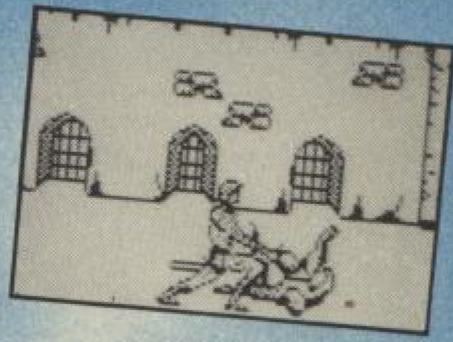
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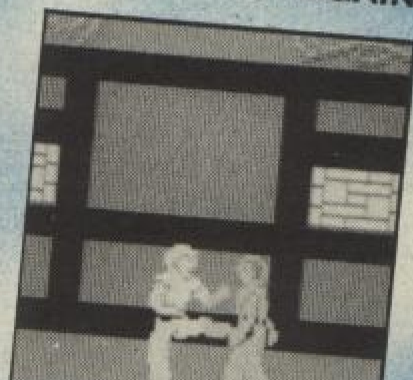
FEATURES

REGULARS

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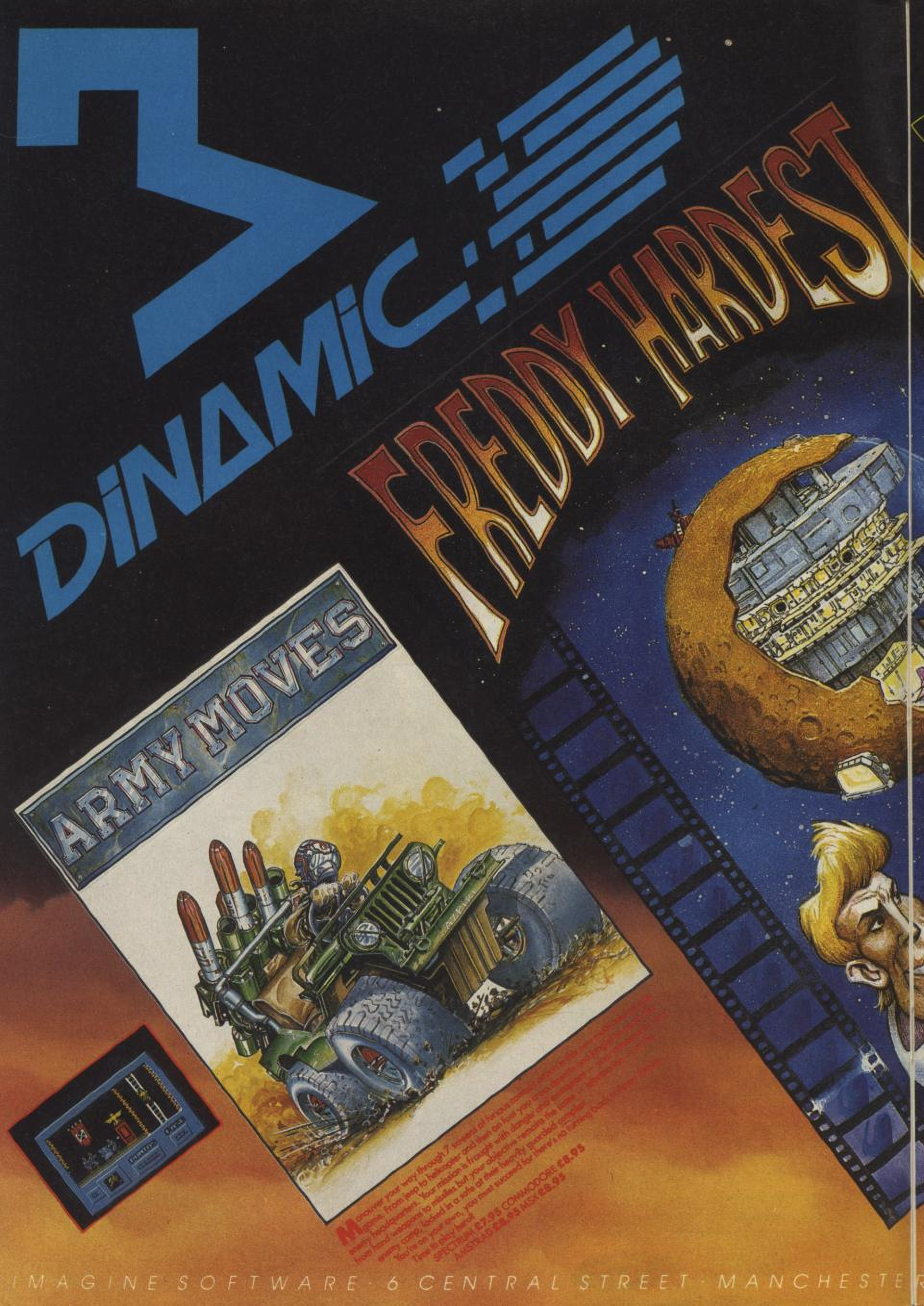
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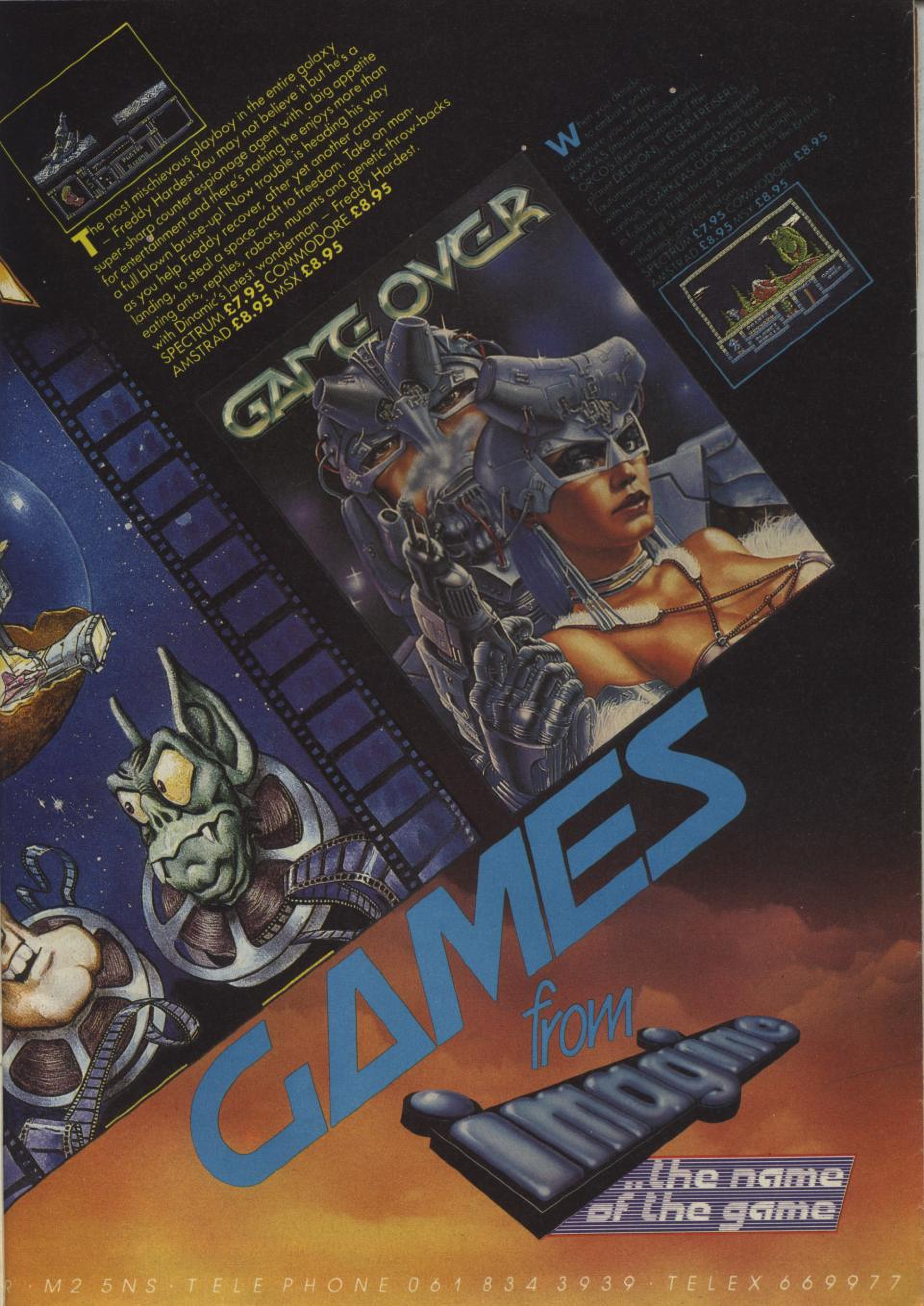


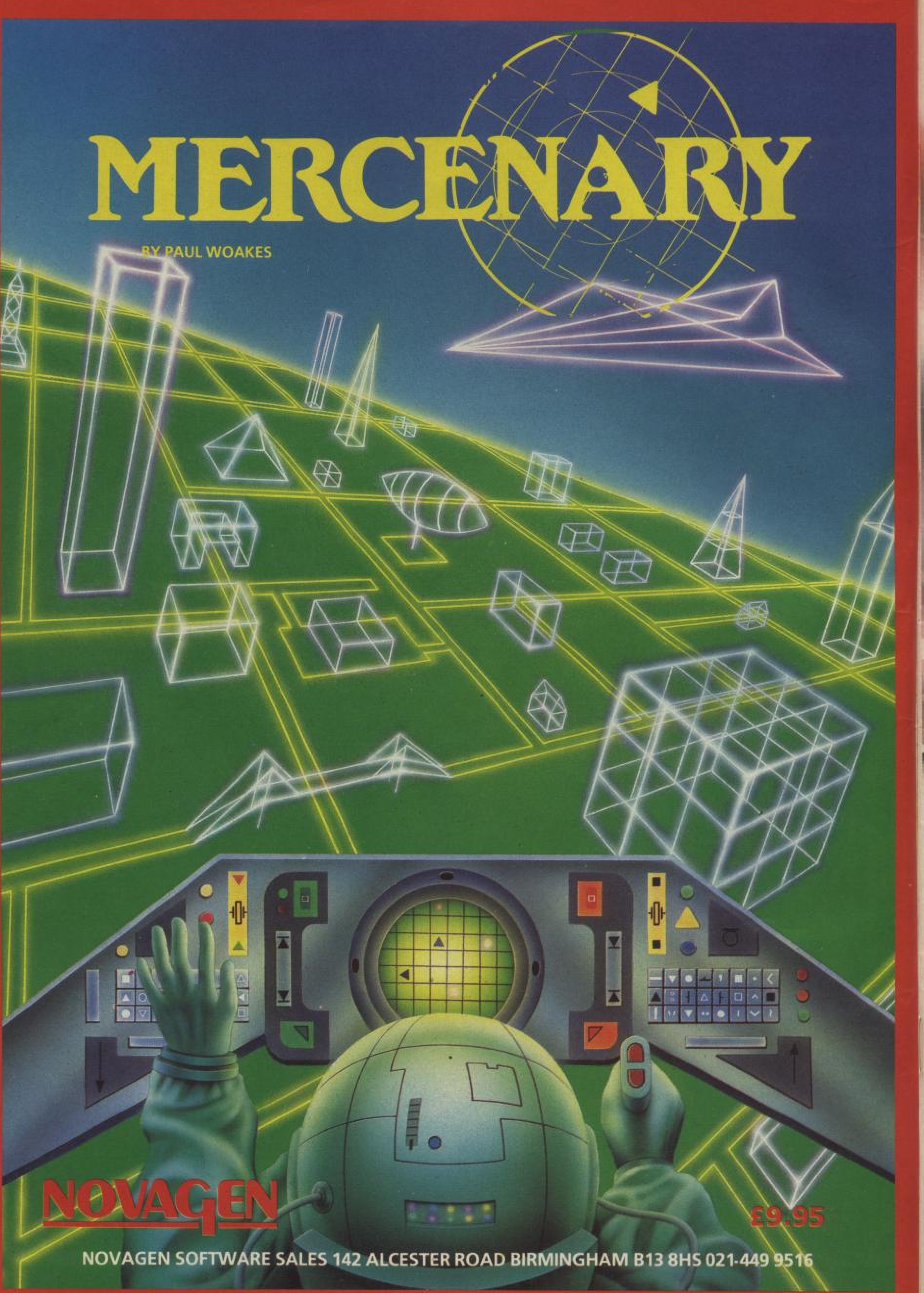


THE CRASH HISTORY

Aa-tenn-shon! Right, list'n up you disgustin' bunch of waifs and strays, the next CRASH will be on parade as from October 29 so I want you smart, tidy and ready for inspecshon! MOVE OUT!
Oh, and Mangram get your 'air cut you 'orrible little man and no lagging behind! Hut, hut, hut!


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CONVERSION TO SPECTRUM 48K BY DR. DAVID AUBREY-JONES

CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM



Roger M Kean



CRASH GOES UP

Straight from the shoulder then: sadly we are forced to make a price increase in CRASH starting next month with the November Issue, No 46, which will be £1.25. We know it seems quite a steep increase, but it should be seen in the light of the period of time over which we have held CRASH down at £1, almost two years in fact. The last increase was for the April 1986 issue. Since then there have been several severe rises in the price of paper which obeys an international market law of supply and demand – there's never enough to go round – plus the usual round of increases in printing services, salaries and overheads.

The increased use of full colour has also added to production costs, as has the greater number of specialist contributors who have allowed us to expand the areas covered by the magazine. So rather than put up the price by a smaller margin, and then have to make further rapid increases, we decided to make the rise sufficient to be able to hold the price for as long as possible – certainly for another 20 months.

In terms of comparable value, we doubt that many other computer titles will hold back with price increases for very long, for they too have suffered escalating production costs. Since CRASH started, it has usually been the first to put up its price when absolutely necessary and the others have always followed within a few months. We do hope you will find this increase acceptable.

SHOULD SHOOT-'EM-UPS BE BANNED?

No. After the Hungerford killings everyone here and throughout the industry was suddenly well aware of the violence in computer games: phrases in reviews like 'it's great fun shooting everything in sight' took on a disturbing new meaning.

And soon after the incident 'an industry figure' wrote in *Computer Trade Weekly* that 'the commercial exploitation of unnecessary violence is a prevalent theme both on the part of the games and magazine publishers'.

We have reconsidered the good taste of what we say in CRASH, and no doubt many software houses will do the same with their games. But the real thrill of most shoot-'em-ups ISN'T the destruction, it's the satisfaction of skill and coordination in a fast-moving game which might as well be hockey. After all, no-one takes 'killing' 'aliens' in 'spacecraft' seriously . . .

This is a subject to which we'll be returning as demands increase for censorship, or at least certification, of games.

GNUDISM

A slight reshuffle at the Towers (Mike Dunn was demanding a bigger desk and having to rent space off Nick Roberts . . .) has meant new titles for a couple of oldies: Roger 'What? Me move ▶

from mag to mag?' Kean and Barnaby Page. We're both still on CRASH – Roger is Editorial Director and Barnaby is Managing Editor.

All that means is that day-to-day hassling – by software houses, readers, potential writers, whoever – should be directed to Barnaby and not Roger. *(Pause for Roger to breathe sigh of relief.)*

Speaking of potential writers, we are looking for a new copy editor – someone who goes through everyone else's writing and corrects spelling, grammatical misteaks and, prepares it to for typesetting. It's not really a game-playing job, but if you're *really* hot on English, probably with A level at least, and you'd like to get into the production side of magazines, contact the Man Ed at CRASH.

ONE OF OUR SUBS OFFERS IS MISSING

It's not often minions make it onto the editorial pages, but a spokesman for Guru Denise has asked us to point out that a few of the US Gold games in the Issue 44 subscription offer have been delayed in programming. Sit tight and they'll arrive!

Also, for technical reasons *Tai-Pan* and *Renegade* may be delayed if you've sent off for them through mail order.

TWO I, BALLS

I, Ball 2 was originally planned as a preview for this issue and only became a review very close to press date. By that time, da boys in design had already – irrevocably – allocated it a place on the preview pages, and the page with the picture on it had left Ludlow. That's why there's a photo but no preview!

In other words, it was an error for technical reasons. *(That's enough technical reasons – Ed Dir) (Who's running this announcement anyway? – Man Ed)*

ROGER KEAN
BARNABY PAGE

IN NEXT MONTH'S CRASH

INTO THE THIRD DIMENSION!

Yes, it's true! We're always going on about 3-D graphics, isometric perspectives *et al*, but in next month's issue, Oli Frey goes three-dee with a vengeance. CRASH is giving every reader a free pair of spectacles with a green lens and a red lens – they'll be tucked inside the issue – through which some of Oliver's illustrations may be seen leaping off the page. Even now, his artwork is being lovingly pulled to pieces, readjusted into depth planes and reconstructed to look real weird. Don't miss out on this truly awesome experience! To be there is to be 3-D!

FX and GRAFFIX

Indeed we are, always going on about 3-D graphics, isometric perspectives, nice little tunes and raunchy explosions *et al*. The film industry started off in back gardens, the software industry in back bedrooms (never the front); films grew in sophistication until today experts are needed in special FX experts, sound and music. Games software production has also grown to the point where programmers are no longer expected to do all the work. Next month we take an in-depth look at the software specialists – the new generation of professionals.

PLUS . . .

FANZINE FILE – more from the sharp edge of private publishing
CRASH CHALLENGE – another victim, but will the hapless person be a reader or a reviewer?
ON TAPE AND DISK – a faulty load, a damaged cassette, we take our bits a plastic for granted, but just how do they get the binary onto tape or disk in massive quantities? CRASH takes a trip round a duplicator.

And that's just some of the exciting items in November's CRASH, on sale Thursday 29 October.

REVIEWS

The CRASH guide to October's offerings

SMASHED!

HOT SHOTS 75% and over . . .

FULL INDEX

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

How to be a COMPLETE



BASTARD

Game

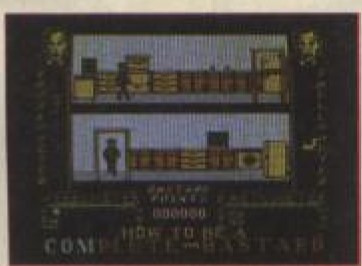
Ade is the sort of person who loosens the screws from the handles of disabled persons' toilets or markets Space Shuttle Jigsaw Puzzles.

In the game he has successfully gate-crashed a yuppie party on the posh side of town and to succeed as **The Complete Bastard** he must incapacitate all the guests by the end of the party and light up each letter in the phrase **COMPLETE-BASTARD**. He must also build up as many **Bastard** Points as he can by extremely offensive behaviour.

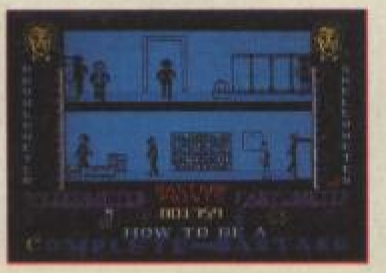
Now you can play Ade and be a **Complete** and **Utter Bastard** in this arcade adventure with split-level screen that's crammed full of absolutely **tasteless humour.**

'Anything this horrible is bound to sell millions.' Sinclair User.

Based on the book of the same name © 1986 by Adrian Edmonson, Mark Leigh, Mike Lepine. A Virgin Book.



Amstrad screen.



Spectrum screen.



HOW TO BE A COMPLETE BASTARD is available from all daring software retailers, or directly from us **under plain brown wrapper.**

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KERRASH!

N·E·W·S I·

If you're reading this at The *PCW* Show, remember that bigger isn't always better and there's plenty to play with at the Microfairs, OK?

COKE ADDS LIFE

***LONDON**, 0610 hrs – a Rapide coach pulls into Victoria station, and a bleary-eyed Scouse alights holding a half-full Coke can (his sixth that night). With a few others he walks off into the teeming rain.*

0635 hrs – a look up the road reveals that the New Horticultural Hall is closed to the public. One of the elders finds a cafe for more coffee and coke, trying to keep awake.

The crowds were gathering for the 24th ZX Microfair that early, and by 9.30 companies had started handing out leaflets outside the hall and *The Bug* was being forced on everyone – but finally the doors opened.

It took about five seconds for the hall to fill up.

The ZX Microfair is still going strong. Romantic Robot showed off its Multiprint and its new Multiface 3 for +3-owners (which Simon N Goodwin introduces on page 120). Sixword had the Swift Disc interface – serious competition for the Disciple, perhaps, though that Rockfort product seemed to dominate the entire upper floor.

Logic Sales, which had bought Rotronics's £130 Wafadrives for a fiver each when the company crashed, managed to sell more than 180 at the fair – for £15 each! (The Wafadrive uses little square wafers that contain loose tape in 16K, 32K or 48K sizes; it has a dual drive and RS232/Centronics interfaces.)

On the comms side, Micronet had a stand and sold VTXs and subscriptions in large quantities; Spectre Comms sold a new ROM for the VTX which makes it do wonderful things. The entire stock went!

Fanzines made a surprisingly prominent appearance, and a new one, *Spectrum Smashes*, was launched at the fair.

And the QL was there in force showing that old computers die hard. Mind you, new computers start early these days – there was a Z88-users' group already set up at the Microfair.

The rest of the fair was taken up by mail-order companies selling games for £2-£5 each as well as hardware and disks; someone got *The Great Space Race* for 25p. (He was ripped off.)

So the ZX Microfair is far from dead; it was a good day out, and it's certainly a cheap way of topping up your games collection.

1800 hrs – boards coach, reclines seat, orders 32nd coke . . .

PAUL EVANS

YOUR POPULAR SINCLAIR UPDATE?

FOCUS MAGAZINES, publisher of *Your Computer* and *Sinclair QL World*, has purchased *Popular Computing Weekly* and *ST Update* from Sunshine Publications – and hopes to make the declining weekly work again.

Says Richard Hease, Managing Director of Focus: 'The two new titles fit in nicely with the other publications that we are producing. I've always wanted to have a go at running a weekly and now I've got the opportunity.'

Hease is not expecting to have to make any changes to *Popular Computing Weekly*, which was relaunched only a few months ago after losing sales. 'I am happy with the way the magazine looks,' he said.

Ironically, it's a sort of homecoming for Brendon Gore, presently Managing Editor at Focus – he helped to set up Sunshine when it was founded in 1981 and is a former editor of *Popular Computing Weekly*!

TONY THOMPSON

DOMARK'S BID FOR SWINDLE CASH

THERE WAS no looking over the shoulder when daring Domark announced this autumn's most licentious licence – a game based on top Tory Jeffrey Archer's best-selling novel *Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less*!!!

Saucy software boss Mark Strachan says it's 'completely brilliant' – but we wonder whether he's thinking about the deal or the tall, handsome politician's story, which tells how four swindled men get their revenge!!!

Tie-ins – don't you just love 'em????!!!!

AMSTRAD CUTS +3 PRICE



► **Will it sell at a new low price?**

THE SPECTRUM +3 will be reduced to £199 from September 23 – the day The *PCW* Show kicks off the new season.

Computer Trade Weekly reported the cut from £249 just as CRASH went to press, confirming long-running industry speculation that Amstrad would not be able to sell the machine at that high price. (Amstrad's move this month was predicted by CRASH in an Issue 43 analysis.)

The trade paper also said that Amstrad is planning a major TV ad boost for the + – and further support for the machine with its built-in disk drive should come from Romantic Robot's Multiface 3 (see page 120), with which some cassette software can be transferred onto disk.

Fear & Loathing



THE GREEKS HAD A WORD FOR IT

Well, two: computer journalism. Hunter S sets off for Crete (en route to Olympia), spends long hours chasing the elusive exclusive and finally gets snapped up by a piranha which turns out to be a bear . . .

ONLY THE ENGLISH weather can turn in just one week from being so hot your skin goes red and peels at the slightest exposure to this shivering, grey autumn! It's at times like this your mind turns to thoughts of somewhere hot – tropical even. And no, I don't mean The *PCW* Show! We'll come to that later.

Nor am I talking about Bangkok, which is where I should be at this very moment in the company of a pack of jet-lagged journos out on the spree – courtesy of System 3, which was looking for the only place in the world not to have heard of Andy Wright to launch its Thai-boxing simulation *Bangkok Knights*.

Actually I was down for this last jaunt till I pulled out, if not quite at the eleventh hour certainly some time after *News At Ten*, and I'm sure you'll look upon it as a gross dereliction of duty when I tell you the reason. I tried all I could to provide a substitute but my erstwhile compatriot, Leslie B, is still missing in action, held by a fanatical sect of Dragon 32-owners somewhere on the Cardiff/Beirut border.

So instead I'm off to Crete, home of the Minotaur and a lot more old bull besides, taking a rather belated honeymoon. After all, it's a full four weeks since the wedding and I reckon Madde deserves some sort of reward for putting up with me so long. For the next fortnight the last thing I'll be thinking of is software – because it seems that for the last four weeks software is *all* I've thought of!

We got married on the Friday – and I can heartily recommend this age-old institution to anyone considering it – and spent the weekend relaxing. Then on Monday morning seven kinds of demons broke loose, the phone started ringing at 9.30 and it didn't stop all day. Since then life has been unbelievably frantic, hectic and all-round wall-crawlingly crazy!

Which brings us to the topic I was trying to follow this month, before I somehow got waylaid. You see, I thought I might talk about what it's like being a freelance journalist. Try to get to the nut, as it were. Only I'm not sure that I can capture the sheer lunacy of spending two-and-a-half hours on trains to conduct a 90-minute interview which has to be sent to Ludlow by Red Star the next day!

Most of this panic is for THE GAMES MACHINE, which is going to be so up-to-the-minute that Graeme Kidd will still be printing copies with the Newsfield John Bull outfit on the stand at The *PCW* Show.

It's exhausting, chasing exclusive after exclusive, knowing that for every extra minute you spend taking a peek at a Christmas game you're going to be late for your next appointment . . .

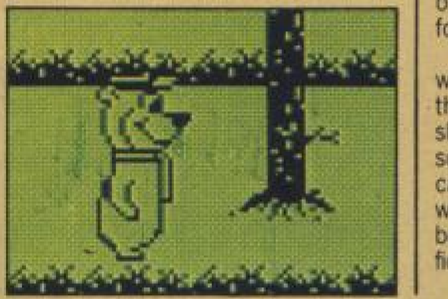
Which is why it was a drop of calming oil on the troubled waters when the phone rang and it was piranha-keeper Helen Holland, wondering if she could take me to lunch. For a moment I wondered what London Zoo's aquarium could want with me . . . maybe I'm the only thing in captivity more voracious than those evil small-finned gourmets!

Then I realised Helen is PR person for Piranha software. Too many months in this game and the circuits become somewhat fried . . . but the promise of a nice calm meal with no hard sell has a soothing effect. Also, Helen hails from Bolton, and we Northerners must stick together.

Piranha is about to move out of its present broom cupboard into something more spacious, and about time too. I've heard of concentrated activity, but the only way you could get more work going on in that room would be to pump out the air! Still, there was room for a monitor at least and Helen sat me down in front of it.

Okay, so the Piranha people have made a Boo Boo. They've also made a Yogi and some extremely irate picnickers. Yes, the game was an early version of *Yogi Bear* – sadly not the Spectrum one – and it looks rather addictive.

Boo Boo's been kidnapped so it's Big Bear to the rescue, leaping streams, dodging snakes and running from campers across 200-odd screens.





Certainly on the Commodore the graphics are everything you could wish for; let's hope they can capture those cartoon sprites on the Speccy.

The company's making quite a thing of cartoon and comic tie-ins. As well as Judge Death, they've signed up none other than the legendary Roy Of The Rovers – the golden boy who's never needed handball to win a match!

Helen told me about visiting Fleetway, the publishers of Roy's exploits. She was greeted by one of the big cheeses there, who proceeded to apologise for Roy's absence.

But away they go to lunch with Helen thinking no more about this cute little touch.

After their repast they return to the offices where big cheese comes to her with an apology: Roy nipped in and was sorry that he couldn't stay, but he signed a book for her. 'Oh aye,' thinks Helen, a woman who recognises a footballing wind-up when she meets one (she's obviously seen Bolton Wanderers play!). She notices a couple of pictures of Roy. 'Could he sign these for me too?' she asks, all innocently.

What follows goes to prove that the world of comics is even weirder than the world of computing. The big cheese shouts 'Hang on a minute, Roy', then scuttles out of the office to see if he can catch him. Catch him he does, returning with two signed photos for a totally befuddled Helen. After all, Roy is just a fictional character – isn't he?

Perhaps not (or is it just that madness is catching?), because Helen hopes he'll be making a personal appearance at The *PCW* Show, along with a big, blue Berk – and she wasn't referring to me, but to the hero of *Through The Trapdoor*.

Helen's strangest mission for the show was a raid on M&S to buy two dozen pairs of Yogi Bear boxer shorts! What strange images of bizarre orgies went through the assistant's mind as she cashed them up? 24 men, stark naked apart from the shorts, with Helen in Jellystone Ranger's uniform spurring them on to greater pleasure with the promise of pickernick baskets? Is this the sort of work a nice Boltonian lass should be doing?

This is Helen's first *PCW* Show, and she's sensibly booked a holiday to follow. She'll need it. The only way to survive those five days of hell and horror at Olympia is to have the promise of a long rest afterwards. Either that or follow the Minson advice and stay in a state of temporary psychosis, developing into comatose babbling stupidity for the Sunday.

I know that by the end of the first day my feet will ache, my voice will be hoarse and my wrist will feel like it's been playing *Hyper-Sports* nonstop from so much pumping of the flesh. But would I miss it? Not on your life. Pain, agony, craziness – yes, that sort of sums up freelance journalism. And I guess that's why I love it!

Yours in suntan oil and ouzo

HUNTER S MINSON

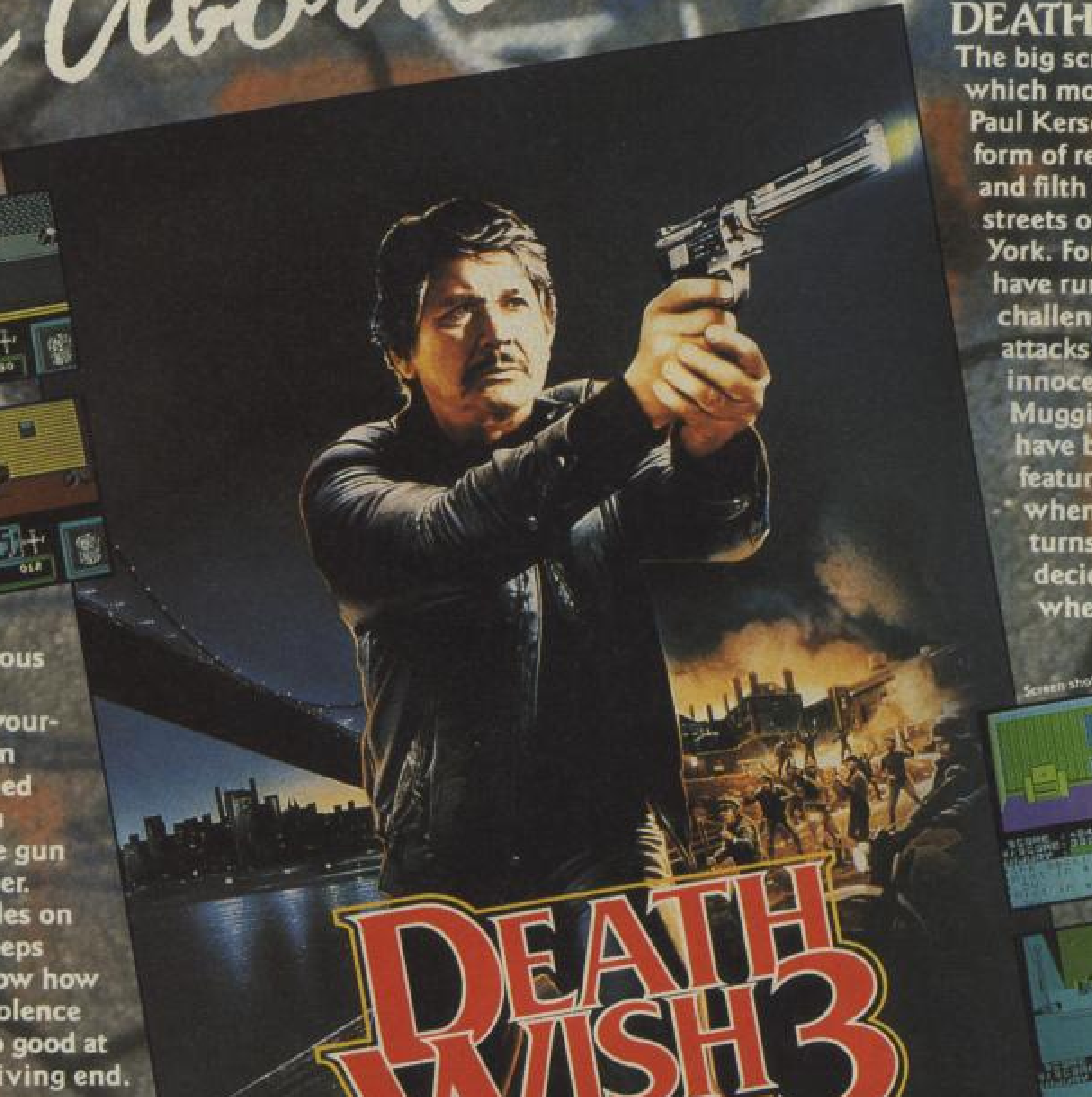


ATTACK!

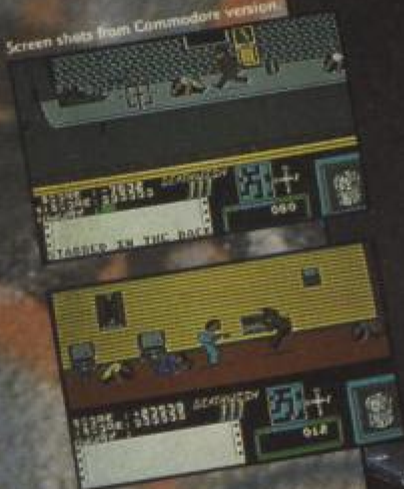
Piranha



New York's Scum Are About To Take Over



Screen shots from Commodore version.



DEATH WISH 3 ....

The big screen classic, in which modern day vigilante Paul Kersey wreaks his own form of revenge on the scum and filth that terrorise the streets of modern day New York. For too long the gangs have run wild, unchallenged in their peverted attacks and violations of innocent citizens. Muggings and robberies have become a daily feature of city life. So when the chief of police turns a blind eye you decide to take over where the law left off.

Screen shots from Spectrum version.



Strap on your famous 475 WILDEY MAGNUM, turn yourself into a one man fighting force armed with pump action shotgun, machine gun and rocket launcher. Now turn the tables on the punks and creeps who certainly know how to dish out the violence but may not be so good at being on the receiving end.

SPECTRUM 48/128K Cassette £7.99

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It's Down To You To Stop Them... You Are Bronson

Gremlin Graphics Software Limited, Alpha House, 10 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. Tel: 0742 753423

GREMLIN

MOTOS



Producer: **M.A.D.**
Retail price: **£2.99**
Authors: **Binary Design**

After a hard day flying a spacecraft, the last thing you want to do is fend off a succession of jostling alien jerks. But that's what you've got to do in *Motos* if you're not to be sent toppling from a series of grids in space. Stray too close to the platform edge, and any unfriendly nudge you receive can end one of your five lives.

So you'd better do it to them before they do it to you. Using your multidirectional capabilities you can help your attackers over the edge with a deft push or two. And you earn points for each globular geek, boisterous bee or overfed orb that you pack off.

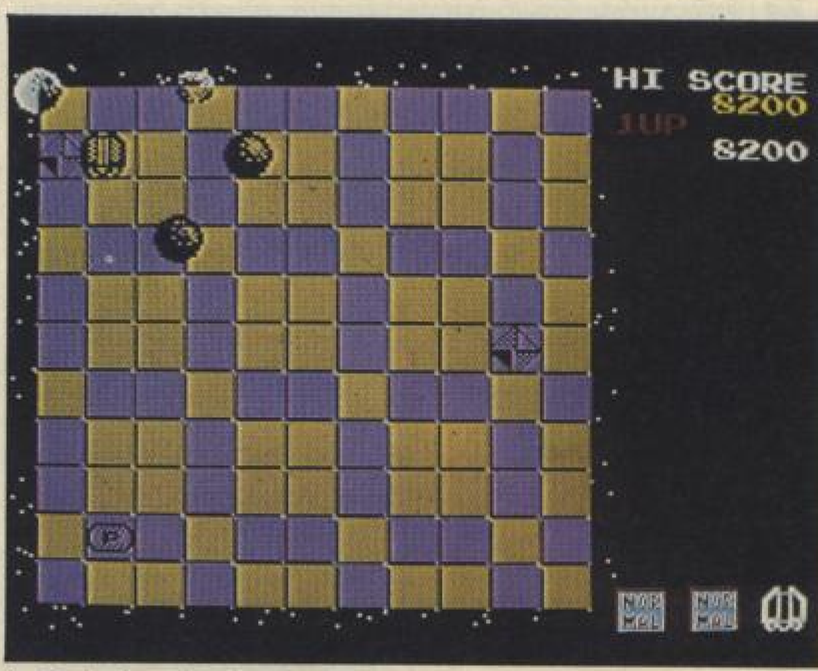
You can also increase your score by carefully nuzzling points beacons toward the edge of the void – and protect yourself by collecting features such as strength and jumping power.

The jump feature can be used to leap to platform islands separate from the main grid. Think before you leap, though; the weight of your landing cracks the delicate component squares of the grid, and if you hit them again they'll disintegrate, leaving you to an unpleasant, deadly fate in space.

A feature can't be used on the screen where it's collected – it has to be saved for later screens. And of course features also use up energy . . .

The grids across which you skitter are eventually attacked by rains of shooting stars and riddled with holes. You can push the pestering extraterrestrials into the gaping chasms – but remember you can go the same way.

Motos is a conversion from the Namco arcade game.



► **Push a few aliens into the deep ravine of space – but don't forget to collect the power pill!**

MIKE

" Motos is really fun, the sort of game that needs absolutely no instructions or story line to make it really enjoyable. The colour is excellent, the sound pleasing; if only all budget games were this good . . . "

79%

NICK

" What a colourful and well-presented game Motos is! The mono/colour choice is useful, and the 128 tunes enhance the game even more. Some of the aliens on higher levels are fantastic, though difficult to destroy. The only thing wrong with Motos is the way it slows down when more aliens arrive on the screen. Motos should appeal to anyone with a sense of pure fun. "

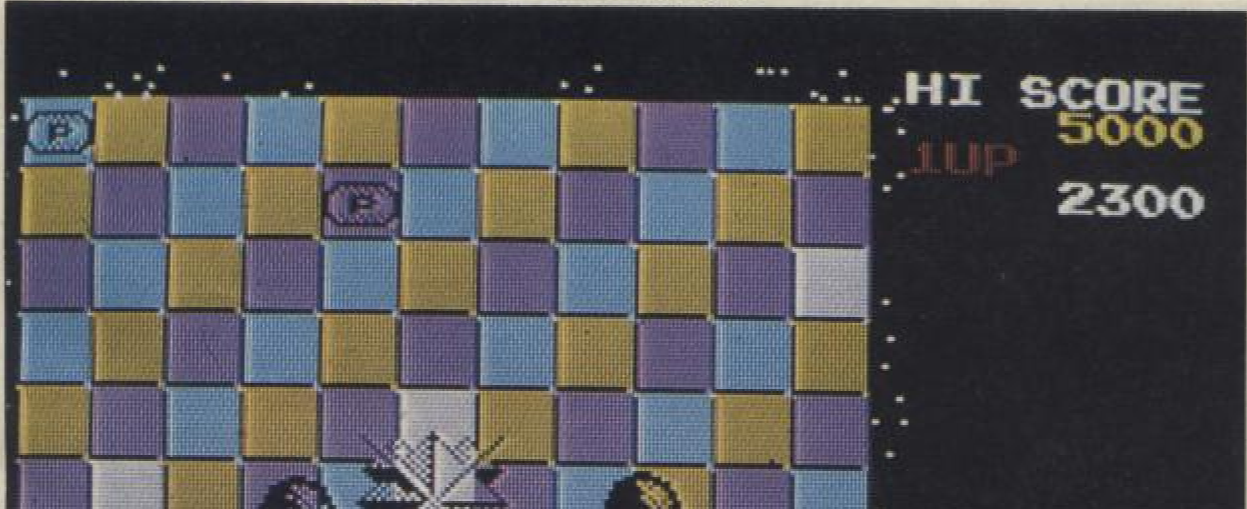
86%

BEN

" Why on earth should Mastertronic want to license such an obscure coin-op? Still, Motos isn't bad – it's well-presented, and there are lots of colourful screens and pleasant 128K tunes. But many of the later levels are too easy, and a game without challenge is about as much good as an ice-cream stand in the Arctic. Motos is instantly playable, but equally forgettable. "

58%

► **M.A.D. but true: the weird *Motos*, licensed from a Namco arcade game**



COMMENTS

Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: simple but well-defined
Sound: reasonable FX, 128 tune
Options: choice of mono or colour display
General rating: *Motos* is a strange licence – but it's addictive and fun

Presentation	79%
Graphics	75%
Playability	80%
Addictive qualities	78%
OVERALL	**74%**

HYSTERIA

Producer: **Software Projects**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Special FX**

Somewhere in the mists of time and space, someone is changing our future by altering our past. An extinct primeval entity is being summoned through the barriers of time by a fanatical sect whose aim is to disrupt the future balance of power.

You are the sole survivor of a once-elite time corps, and you have been summoned to destroy this evil threat. The battle takes place in a once-thriving small town in the middle of nowhere – where there's a big problem. The locals aren't all that keen on time warriors and time lords, and they tend to get a mite upset at the sight of the multicoloured scarf and the police box.

But your mission is essential, and among your heavy armour and weapons you have a revolutionary energy-conversion kit that will turn harmless mortal objects such as lemons and worms into ultrapowerful weapons. (Some of the weapons don't last very long, though.)

The evil conspirators can be unveiled by destroying hostile busts – different ones on every level – which sometimes fire at you. Destroying a bust earns you a piece of a special jigsaw puzzle; collect six pieces of the jigsaw and an evil being becomes visible. This terrible entity is then forced to attack you – and this is your chance to weaken the monstrosity and repel it before moving on to another era and another enemy.

RICKY

" Graphically superb and well-animated, with some beautifully detailed characters, Hysteria **is an addictive and playable game. The screen display seems well thought-out: there's never any confusion, whether you want to know your energy level, how many more pieces to collect, or whatever. Though** Hysteria **doesn't offer a long-term challenge, it'll certainly provide a lot of frantic fun for a while. "**

80%

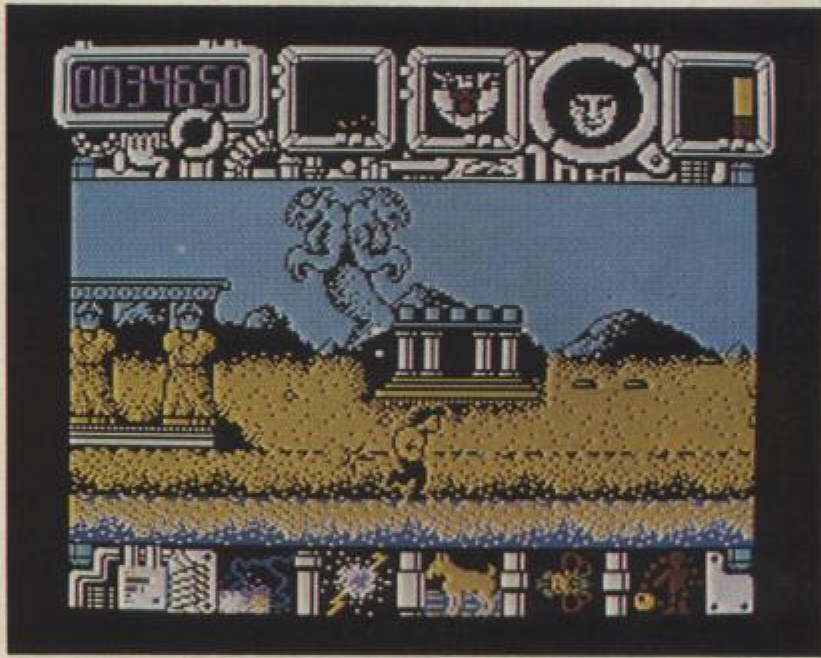
NICK

" Hysteria **is the right name for this game, it's so frustrating when you get savagely killed. The game layout is very similar to** Ghosts 'n' Goblins **and the colour scrolling works quite well despite occasional clash. The gradually disappearing bust which shows your remaining strength is a neat idea, like the icons.** Hysteria **is a superb game with plenty of depth. "**

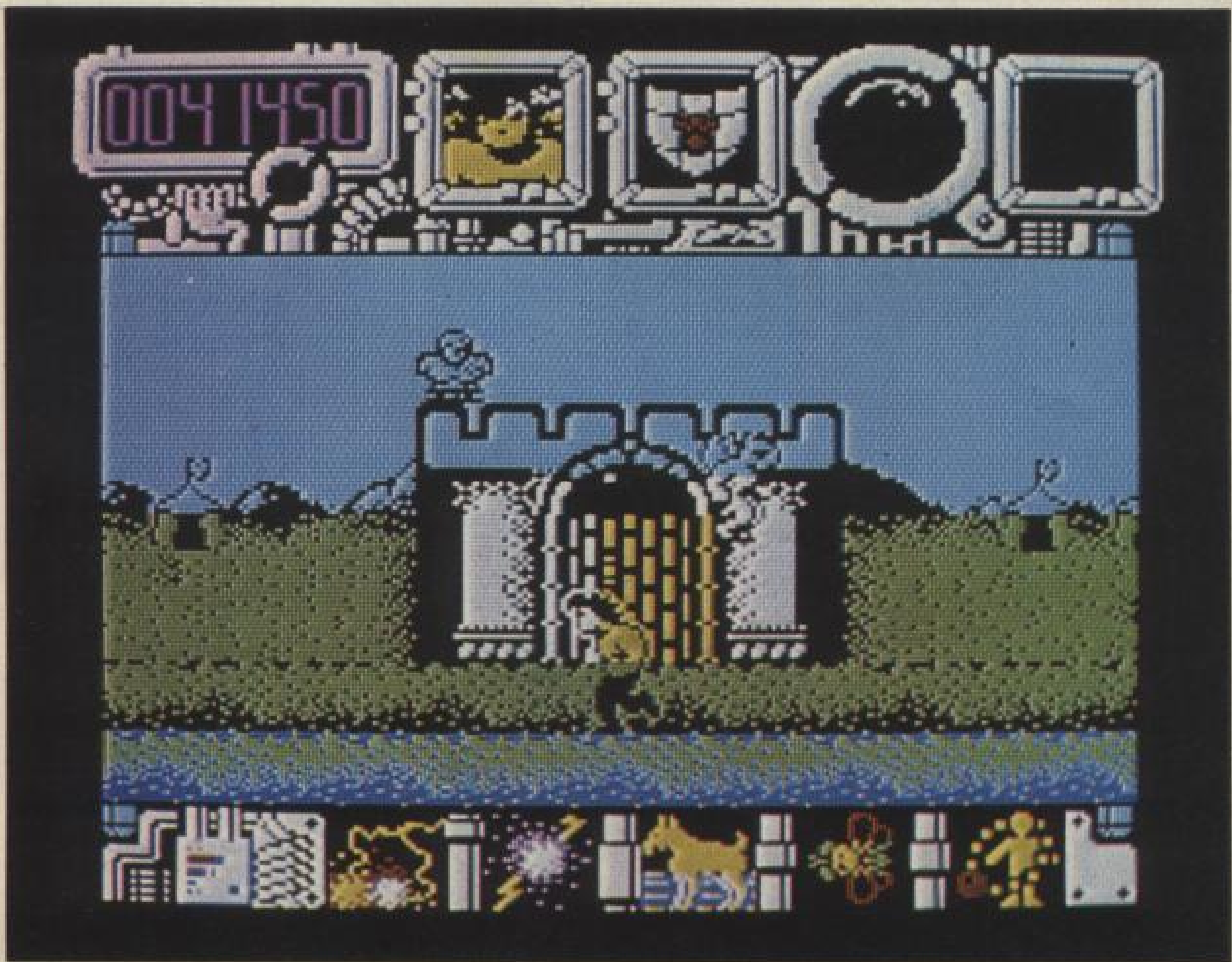
76%



From the strange primeval mists of time and space comes a horrifying threat – sounds like Cam on a Monday morning



► Words fail us as another huge end-of-level monster approaches . . .



BEN

" At first I was well put off by Hysteria**'s resemblance to** Cobra**. Basically it's like the Ocean game tarted up with a few extra features; the graphical style, the sound and the feel are all unoriginal. But the gameplay has been changed, if not for the better, and** Hysteria **is good fun – and probably will be till I complete it. "**

78%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: well-defined and colourful
Sound: a couple of tunes and perfunctory FX
Options: definable keys
General rating: a good *Cobra*esque game

Presentation	82%
Graphics	81%
Playability	77%
Addictive qualities	67%
OVERALL	**78%**

MOONSTRIKE

Producer: **Mirrorsoft**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Binary Innovations**

You're out for revenge after Sir Humphrey Bogus, inventor of the digital tea bag, said something rather unpleasant about your grandmother. Seated in a multidirectional space craft, you begin your cruise of death over a vertically scrolling lunar surface.

This moon world is encrusted with craters and enemy bases from which come a stream of invulnerable blast molecules. These circular particles compete with numerous other destructive features such as light bulbs, bombs with rotating tails, and spinning boulders to blast your fragile space vehicle into insignificance, doing more damage than Arthur Daley could ever repair.

Approaching hazards must be avoided, or destroyed; and lunar bases can be taken out by accurate fire from your blazing blasters before they send too many obnoxious weapons in your direction.

Wipe out these perils and you earn points – but if they pierce your craft's vulnerable protective skin, you lose one of your three lives.

Watch out for the Mona Lisa on the third level (though even she can have her enigmatic smirk removed by a sudden decapitation) and deal some irrevocable blows to the smug-looking smilies (y'know, those horrible happy badges that ageing hippies wear).

Moonstrike is the first game to use Movieload, a system developed by Mirrorsoft which displays changing text and pictures while the main program is loading.

NICK

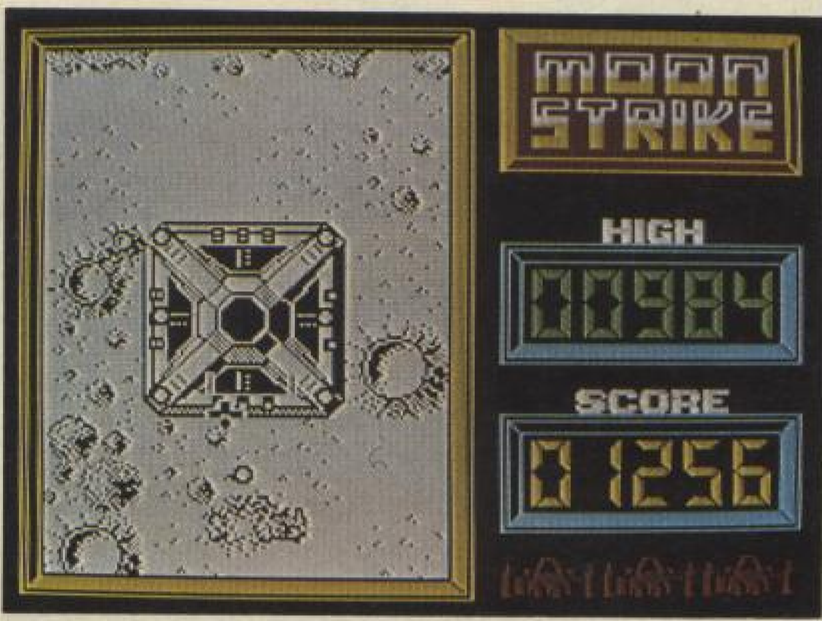
" The graphics are fantastic, getting better as you progress from level to level, and the animation of some of the nasties is well done and very smooth. The general idea is very similar to Lightforce **games; the main object is to destroy everything. The only thing wrong with** Moonstrike **is that your ship moves too slowly and so avoiding bombs becomes very frustrating. But it's an ace game. "**

90%

BEN

" When smooth, well-presented, vertically scrolling shoot-'em-ups such as Lightforce **first appeared on the Speccy I was interested. But now, after a year, I'm sick of them because there's been no great improvement in quality or gameplay. Originality (or unoriginality) aside,** Moonstrike **is boring; it's a little too difficult so there's rarely any sense of achievement, and it plays far too slowly to be appealing. But the graphics, the game's redeeming feature, are excellent: the characters are large and beautifully animated and the attention to detail on the landscape is amazing. There are a few nice touches – look out for the Mona Lisa! If you haven't got a game of this type on the shelf already** Moonstrike **is reasonable, but others are just that bit more playable . . . "**

67%



► More digital tea-bag trickery

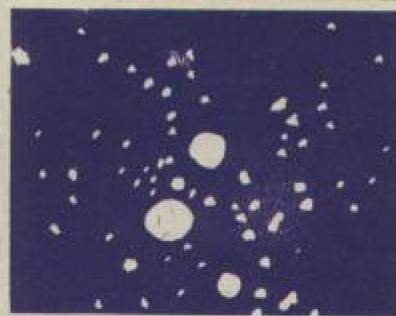
► Clear granny's name and launch into *Moonstrike*



RICKY

" The Movieloading of Moonstrike **uses humour reminiscent of** The Hitch-Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy, **but it's just as well there's a normal loader too; the new technique takes time and after you've seen it once or twice the hilarity begins to wear off. The game itself is a competent variation on the traditional shoot-'em-up, and the peculiar aliens such as bomb-spitting flowers and killer light bulbs brighten up what could otherwise have been tedious. "**

73%



COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: monochromatic – but beautifully detailed, and large
Sound: good tune and typical blasting FX
General rating: a super shoot-'em-up with a humorous edge

Presentation	86%
Graphics	86%
Playability	72%
Addictive qualities	68%
OVERALL	**77%**

HOW TO BE A COMPLETE BASTARD

Producer: **Virgin Games**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Sentient Software**

Are YOU a complete bastard? You can try your worst in this adaptation of Adrian Edmondson's Virgin book. With all the decorum of a herd of psychopathic wildebeest, you manage to gate-crash a fwightfully yuppie party and proceed to wreak havoc.

A split screen shows two views of every room you enter; either can be rotated to show a further aspect.

This offers you the great opportunity of thoroughly searching other people's furniture. Behind the closed doors of cupboards, units and wardrobes lurk everyday items that in the right hands – your hands – can cause aggravation, irritation and mutilation to any unfortunate in the vicinity. Any two objects can be carried at once and examined at will, but how you can use them depends on how drunk you are.

Your body is one great factory of noxious gases, fuelled by what you eat and measured by a Fartometer; these fumes, delivered with all the grace you can muster, clear rooms of guests – fast. (Take care near naked flames, though.) You are also linked to a Smellometer registering a general level of BO which, for a true bastard, should be high.

Drink is readily available: extra-strong lager intoxicates you quickly, as shown on the Drunkometer, but if you drink too much the display begins to spin wildly.

Check your water levels on the Weeometer and go. go go while you can. Leave things too long and an unthoughtful Nigel or Samantha might have occupied the loo. But you could go elsewhere, couldn't you?

Limitless supplies of coffee can sober you up: so can medicine. Other liquids should be avoided if you want to stay alive!

The yuppie guests provide the ideal opportunity for you to engage in highly undesirable conversations. Push them hard against obstructions and they'll find it hard to resist your charms, offering information and providing the opportunity for a bit more mayhem.

Each of the unpleasant actions you commit earns you Bastard points, but other things are considered very girlie, and must be avoided if you want to keep that total high. If your unpleasant activities force the yuppie guests into leaving, letters making up the phrase 'COMPLETE-BASTARD' light up. The game is finished when all of these letters are illuminated, by which time you'll have the place to yourself.

BEN

" Coming from the people who did Tai-Pan, **one of the most serious games this year, this is a shock – and it should have been much more appealing. There are a few nice features, like Bastavision, but though they're neat they don't add much to the gameplay.** How To Be A Complete Bastard **is along the lines of** Jack The Nipper, **with lots of added nausea and bad taste – it's fun to play for a bit, but I doubt you'll come back to it. "**

65%

NICK

" Adrian Edmondson's book is brilliant, and so is this game. The graphics are well-defined and the colour is good, though limited. The way you can rotate both the top and the bottom screens is very confusing, but essential. "

87%

MIKE

" Such a lot of this depends on your opinion of Ade Edmondson's humour. If, like me, you quite enjoy it, then the game should appeal, but there's a lot in it that could easily offend. And if CRL's Dracula, **not a particularly nasty game, carried a 15 certificate then surely this should be subject to certification too. Still, the graphics are quite good, the text is usually quite funny, and though the jokes stop being funny after 10,000,000 goes the game remains reasonably playable. "**

69%



► In glorious Tackovision, Cameron prepares to be complete

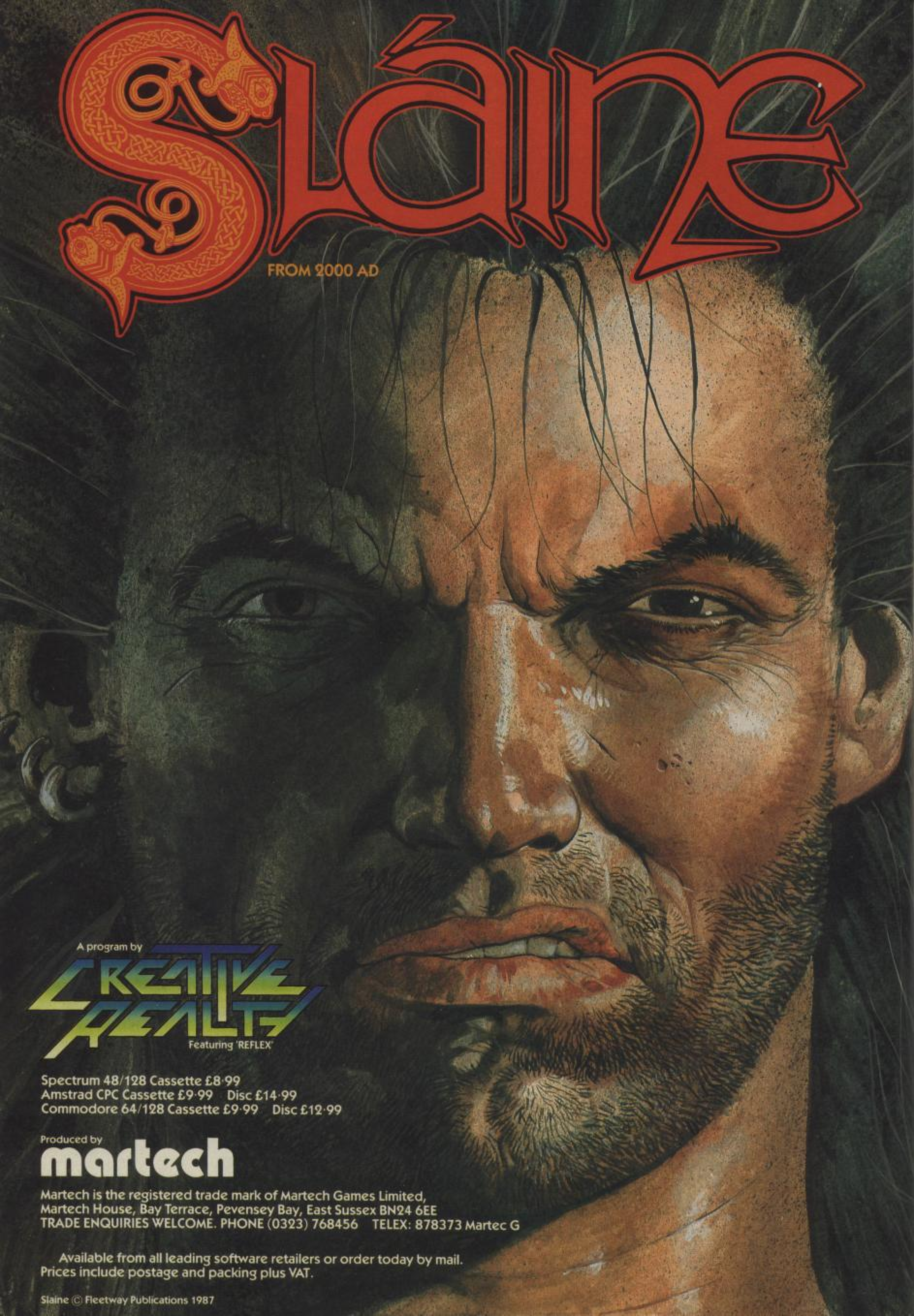


COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: good monochromatic playing area with decorative surrounds
Sound: girlie opening tune, and spot FX
General rating: humorous and generally good, but perhaps not much lastability

Presentation	75%
Graphics	71%
Playability	72%
Addictive qualities	70%
OVERALL	**73%**


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ATHENA

Producer: **Ocean**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Andrew Deakin**

Voluptuous Athena, goddess of wisdom – *worra woman*. Tired with the everyday life of cleaning her heavenly home, our bikini beauty decides it's about time she got involved in a bit of the old heroic dealings. So off she sets to battle her way through six levels of forest, ice, land, sea, sky and hell.

Our heroine is no dumb blonde – this girl can jump, duck and run through these strange multilevel arenas, facing perilous odds as bizarre beasties attack her. Peanut men advance, demons close in, apples fly through the air, and armadillos swing into action.

By giving a good kicking to the first bad guys she meets, Athena can gather their weapons and, armed with perhaps an axe or a ball and chain, move on with a little more confidence. She scores points for every creature she thumps to death.

Our dynamic damsel's weaponry can also be used to demolish the rocks and blocks that make up the landscapes. This reveals some useful objects for Athena's arsenal – and some deadly ones, so look out. Athena can also collect wings and fins to speed her on her dangerous way.

But the beasts reduce Athena's life force (you *knew* there was a catch), and she has only five lives. To restore her vitality, the curvaceous fighter can destroy roses, which release collectable hearts.

The goddess with gumption can leave each world by battling past a large and mighty sentinel, but wimps are advised to seek the other exit. And hurry – on each level a time countdown limits our heroines's scope for slothful perambulation.

BEN

" Athena **could have been very good – with rigorous playtesting. But as it stands the game is unplayable and unappealing. The graphics, small but neat and nicely animated, go a long way to redeeming it, though they do flicker occasionally. The sound is also well above average, with loads of good tunes and atmospheric effects crammed in. But you'll have to look elsewhere for a decent heroine . . .** "

60%

RICKY

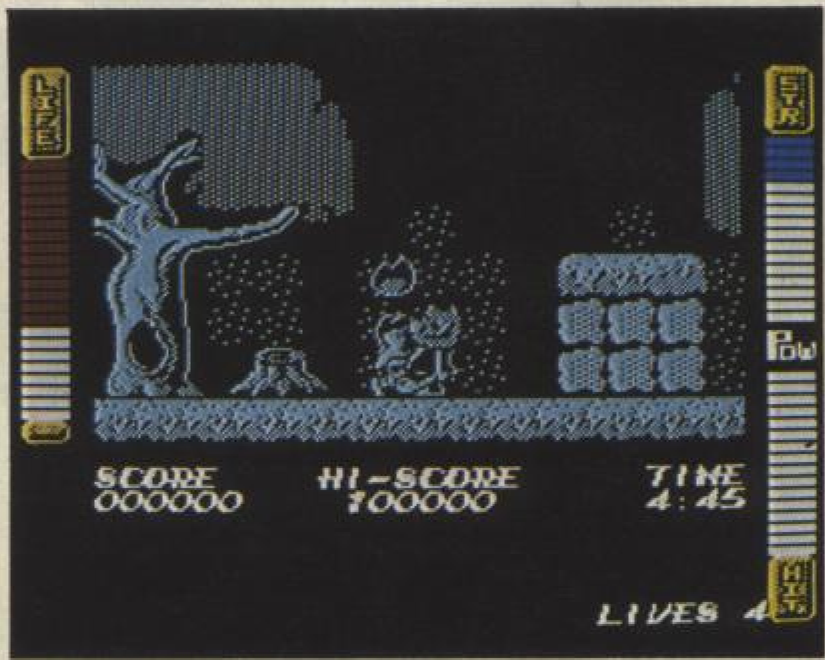
" Athena **is definitely not for the arcade novice – it's an excruciating challenge to beat, through level after level of madcap violence. I needed all Athena's 15 lives to survive the first three levels! Graphically good and addictive,** Athena **is worthwhile for fans of the original and all hardened arcade players.** "

80%

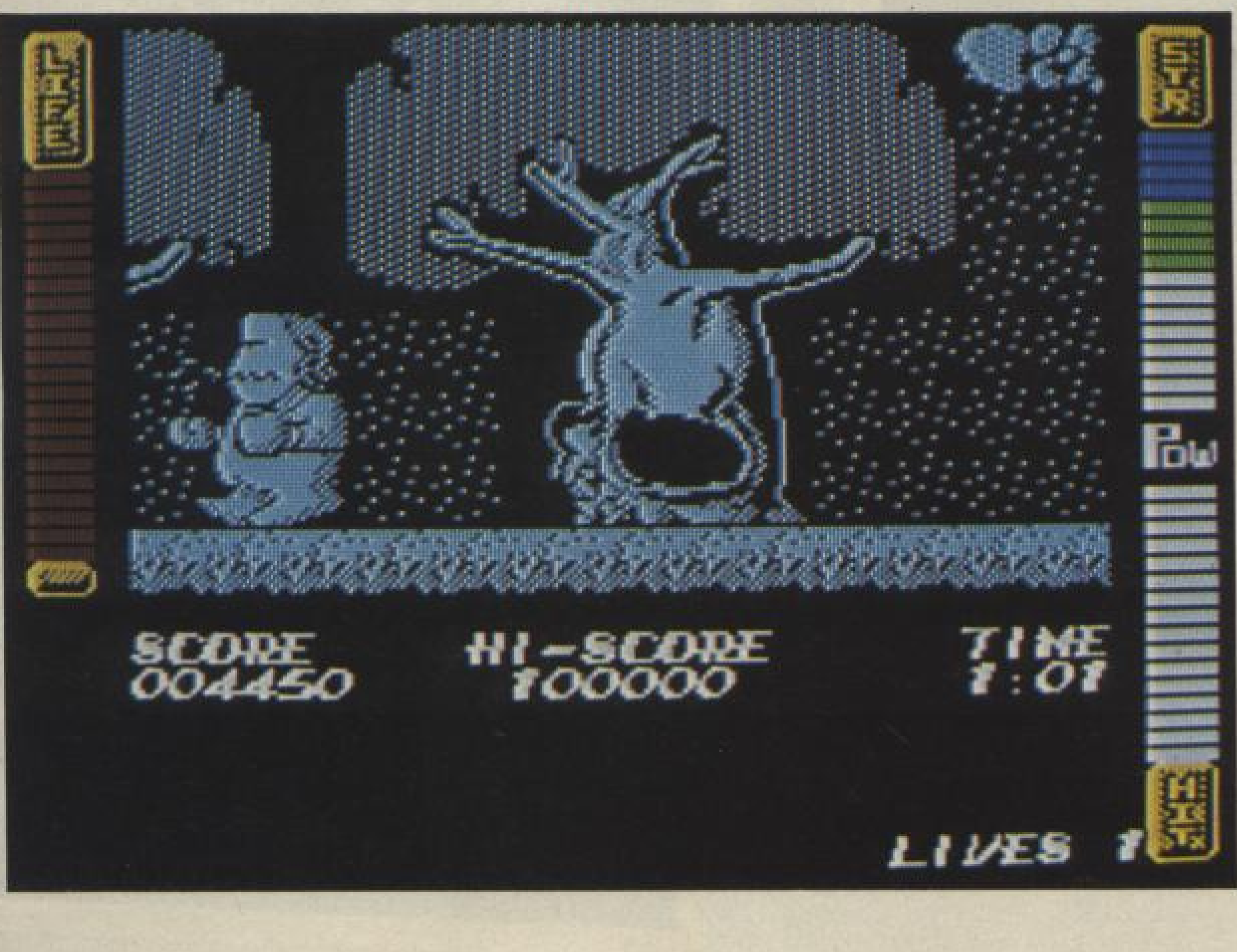
NICK

" **Wow!** Athena **has all the qualities you expect of a good arcade adventure, though it's a bit too hard. The shading is excellent, and there are some really lovable characters – I liked the hooded ghost and the big-nosed ogre. This is simply an excellent game.** "

86%



► **I'm no soppy girlie, I'm Athena and I'm about to shove a monster off this mortal coil . . .**



COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: small, neat, but monochromatic
Sound: lots of imaginative effects and tunes
Options: if you die on one of the first five levels, you can continue from the same point with a new set of five lives (the clock carries on, though) – up to 15 extra lives can be wangled this way
General rating: a challenging arcade conversion with plenty of depth

Presentation	85%
Graphics	80%
Playability	62%
Addictive qualities	61%
OVERALL	**75%**

W·I·Z·B·A·L·L



► Choosing a weapon in the Wiz-Lab

If you were a wizened Wizard with a magical cat on a planet filled with colourful landscapes you'd be jolly fed up if someone tried to turn it into monochrome, wouldn't you? Of course you would. It's like suddenly being told your Amiga has attribute clash.

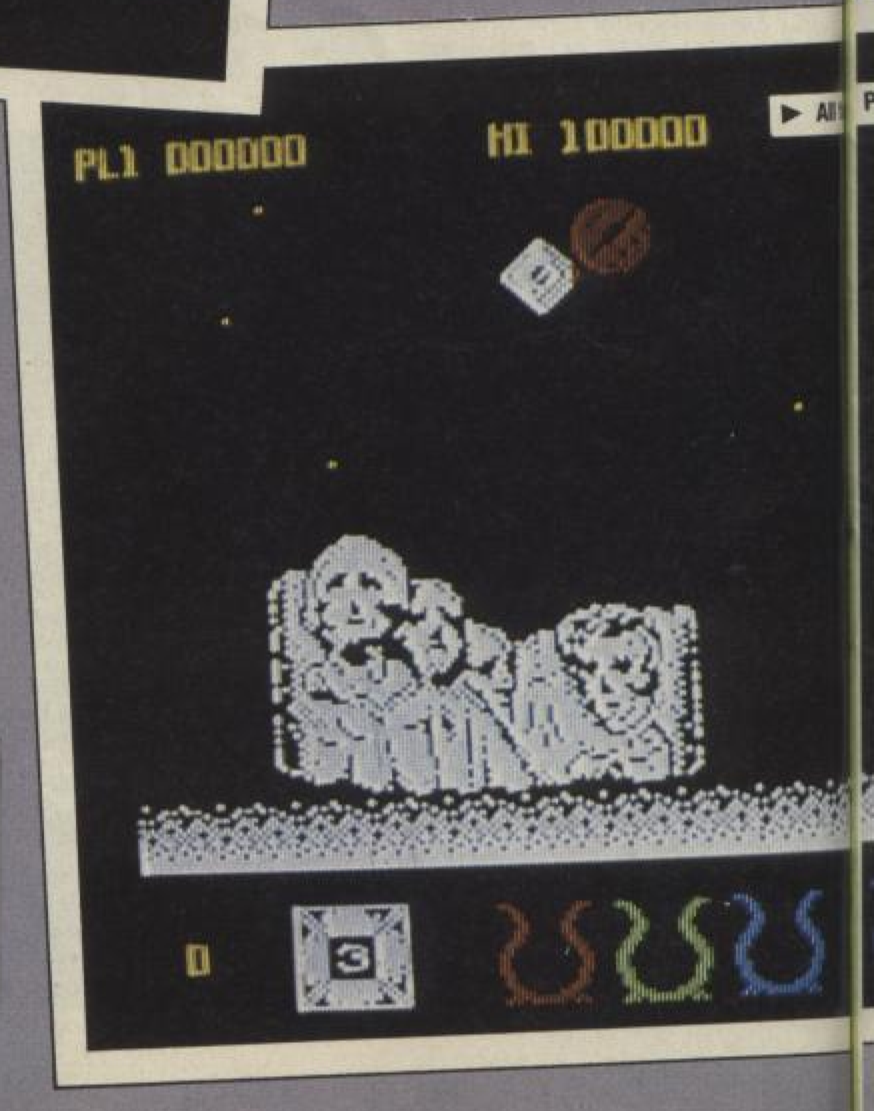
And that's exactly how Wiz feels when Zark and his unpleasant horde of helpers bleach his colourful Wizworld.

So, with a spherical Wizball space transporter to help him, Wiz begins to eliminate the invading colour-blind hordes. When the game begins, the transporter can spin to the left or right and bounce through the now drab Wizworld.

As Wiz progresses, he encounters lethal aliens: waves of crabs, diamonds and multiarmed spindles, all threatening poor Wiz's three lives. These creatures can be destroyed, for points, by the transporter. Many of them reveal green, smiling pearl faces when killed; by touching these faces Wiz collects extra capabilities, including supa-beams and blazers, protective sprays, smart bombs, shields, and a thruster and anti-grav powers to give him more control of the bouncing transporter.



► Wizball floats on in search of a little local colour



Producer: **Ocean**
Retail price: **£7.95**

But probably the most important thing for our crumbly warlock is Catelite, the magical feline.

Wizworld is composed of three colours: red, green and blue. To restore the brightness that Zark

" Wizball is one of the most playable games I've ever seen, despite some trivial bugs. The controls are perfect, though they're incredibly difficult to get to grips with (the instructions are less than clear, too)! The smooth-moving graphics are strikingly original, and the colour clash doesn't affect them too much. This is one hell of a game, so go geddit. "
BEN **92%**

and his mob have drained away, Wiz must burst floating colour bubbles. As droplets from them fall earthward, Catelite can gather them up.

As he does so, each droplet is placed in one of three empty cauldrons – one cauldron for each colour in the magic land. When a cauldron is full, one colour of Wizworld

" Wizball's graphics are fantastic and well-defined, and the higher levels reveal more and more delights – including wild assortments of aliens. And the bouncing Wizball looks like a cross between a Critter and Bobby Bearing! There are some decent spot FX, and a good 128 tune. Though the controls are difficult at first, it gets more playable and rewarding as you progress – an ace game. "
NICK **90%**

comes back to life; Wiz and Catelite can then concentrate on gathering the remaining colours.

Completing a colour also allows Wiz to visit his Wiz-Lab and gather yet more unbelievable powers.

" Wizball is a classic. The graphics are brilliant, despite some colour clash, and sound is excellent on the 128s (but a bit limited on the 48s). At first the bouncing is difficult to control – but once it's mastered and you've picked up a few of the right icons, Wizball becomes one of the best shoot-'em-ups I've played for ages. It's so polished it shines! "
MIKE **93%**

When all three colours have been collected, Wizworld is restored to its old glory, and Wiz and his cat can go home to toast the defeat of Zark with the wizard's favourite drink – a well-earned glass of bat's bowel and hemlock fizz. Yum.

the President's men look on . . .



COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: weird, wonderful and well-defined despite some attribute clash
Sound: some pleasant ditties
General rating: a few control problems hardly detract from entertaining and playable game

Presentation	87%
Graphics	88%
Playability	93%
Addictive qualities	92%
OVERALL	**92%**

Reviews

GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR

Producer: **Code Masters**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Authors: **the Oliver Twins**

Your stomach's full of butterflies but now it's too late, you're sitting in a Grand Prix racing car and the green start light is just about to flash. With the strident countdown still rumbling in your ears and the smell of scorched rubber and the tang of hot oil burning in your nostrils, you blast away from the start.

In this simulation, your car must be taken successfully around a series of 14 circuits, shown in bird's-eye view. As you carefully accelerate and decelerate around the track, negotiating bends and avoiding obstacles such as bridges, careful steering is essential – misjudge a corner and you could go spinning off the tarmac.

A clock shows each car's lap time, and after the race you're ranked as a 'fair' driver or a master.

When *Grand Prix Simulator* was released for the Amstrad CPC this spring, Activision alleged a breach of copyright: the Code Masters game was too similar to the coin-op *Super Sprint*, Activision said, pointing out that it owned the license to that arcade game.

CRITICISM

● " *Grand Prix Simulator* is terrible. If you can actually find your car – not an easy task, especially on a badly-tuned TV, as it's only about four pixels long – then there's about ten minutes of interest here. There's certainly none of the addictiveness of a good racing game. "
MIKE **38%**

● **" Ever wondered what it's like to race in a Grand Prix? If not, this is the game for you because playing** Grand Prix Simulator **WON'T show you what it's like. The graphics are ultratrash, except for a bit of decent drawing on the borders; colour is badly-used because all the racetracks are mostly green and there's colour clash when you go near a barrier. Between games it sounds as if Donald Sinden has been bribed into doing some digitised speech. This won't be worth buying, even to the car-racing enthusiast. "**
NICK **46%**

● " *I'd listened to too much hype about* Grand Prix Simulator *– now I'm very disappointed. The game is fiddly to control and has little of the addictivity of good arcade racing games. The characters are small – because the 'car window' screen is. But the speech is OK, if not quite up to I, Ball II standard! And I wouldn't be surprised to see this shoot to the top of the budget charts very soon – take your own risks . . .* "
RICKY **41%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: colourful but small and poorly-animated
Sound: good tune, but the car engine sounds like it's about to sieze up
Options: two simultaneous players, definable keys
General rating: a below-average race-driving simulation

Presentation	38%
Graphics	25%
Playability	40%
Addictive qualities	41%
OVERALL	**42%**

► **Vrrroooom! Racing round the Grand Prix track – watch out for blood on the road!**



PLEXAR

Producer: **M.A.D.**
Retail price: **£2.99**
Authors: **Paul Hargreaves**

Long before a Reliant Robin had ever broken down on the M25, the Miracle Engineers had planned and built the crystal roads that led across the planet Plexar.

Now the Miracle Engineers are long dead and the primitive Plexarians have taken their place. Unlike their sophisticated predecessors, they are a superstitious race who send victims along the crystal roads to appease mysterious deities. Few return from this voyage – but as a chosen 'volunteer', can you survive it?

Your journey is made up of two stages: the crystal roads themselves, and the diamond towers where the roads meet and interconnect, joining continent with continent.

MARK

" 'Wow, what pretty graphics,' I thought as the intro screen zinged onto the monitor, 'is the gameplay as good as the cosmetics?' Yes, Plexar **is very playable, and despite the obvious similarities to** Trailblazer **it kept me glued to the screen for a good while. Control is easy, and the gameplay is just frustrating enough to make you want to complete just one more level . . . "**

82%

Each road consists of a series of interconnected squares, some of which contain lethal things that can end your life on the spot. Others merely offer the unusual, useful or hindering, sending you shooting sideways, taking you on a helicopter ride, propelling you forward across dangerous squares, or making you skitter randomly between squares.



► **Blazing the trails in the third section of** *Plexar*

If you've successfully navigated this roadway without too much mishap, you enter one of the diamond towers. These are weird places, full of complicated, vertically scrolling mazeworks of unidirectional conveyor belts, areas which simply vanish now and again, shivering colonies of pulsing jellies and obstructive walls.

And in the towers are found the patrolling servicebots that drain your energy at their every touch. To protect your meagre reserves, leap away from the approaching mechanical embraces.

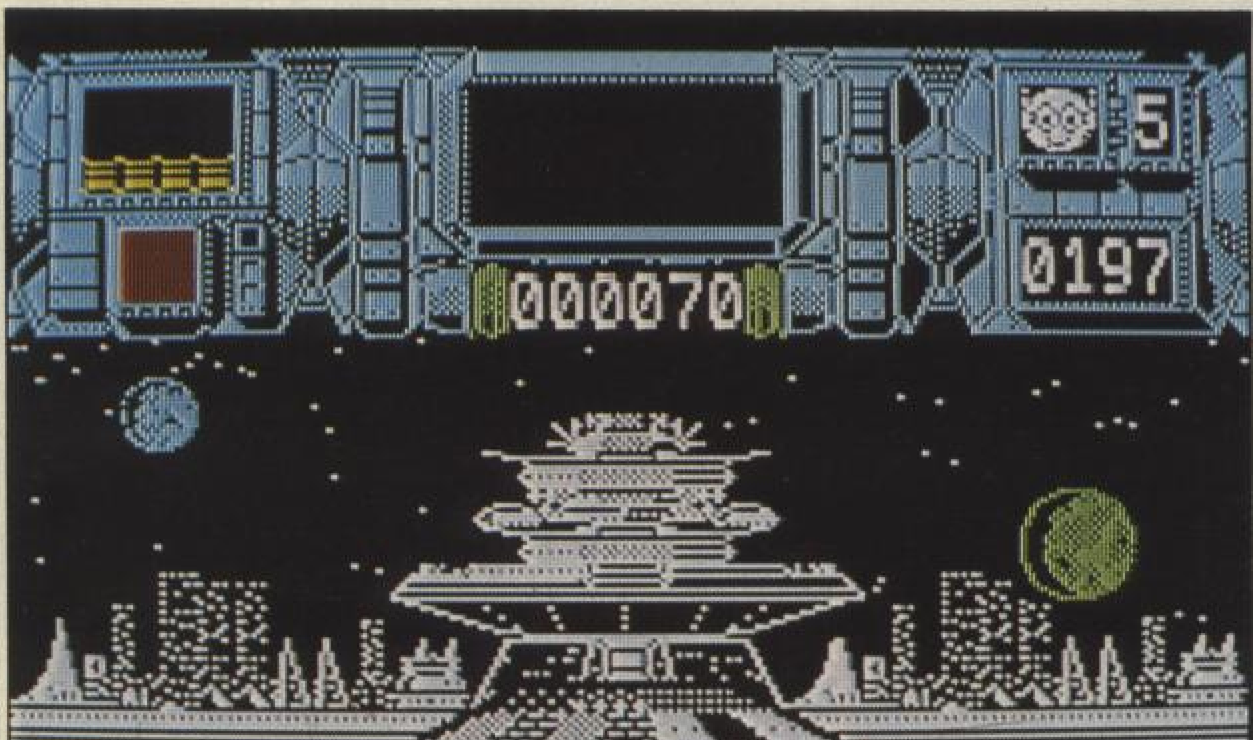
A peril port at the top left of the screen changes colour and signifies when danger is imminent. Heed its warning well if you want a chance of survival – and never forget that against all this is the relentless countdown of the clock.

RICKY

" Bearing some similarities – well, quite a lot, really – to Trailblazer, Plexar **is playable but frustrating. And it goes beyond** Trailblazer **with some features to vary the predictability of your journey (transporters, for instance).** Plexar **can become quite tricky when the track is upside down, but it all adds to the excitement! "**

80%

► **Flex those plexars and bounce off down the track**



ROBIN

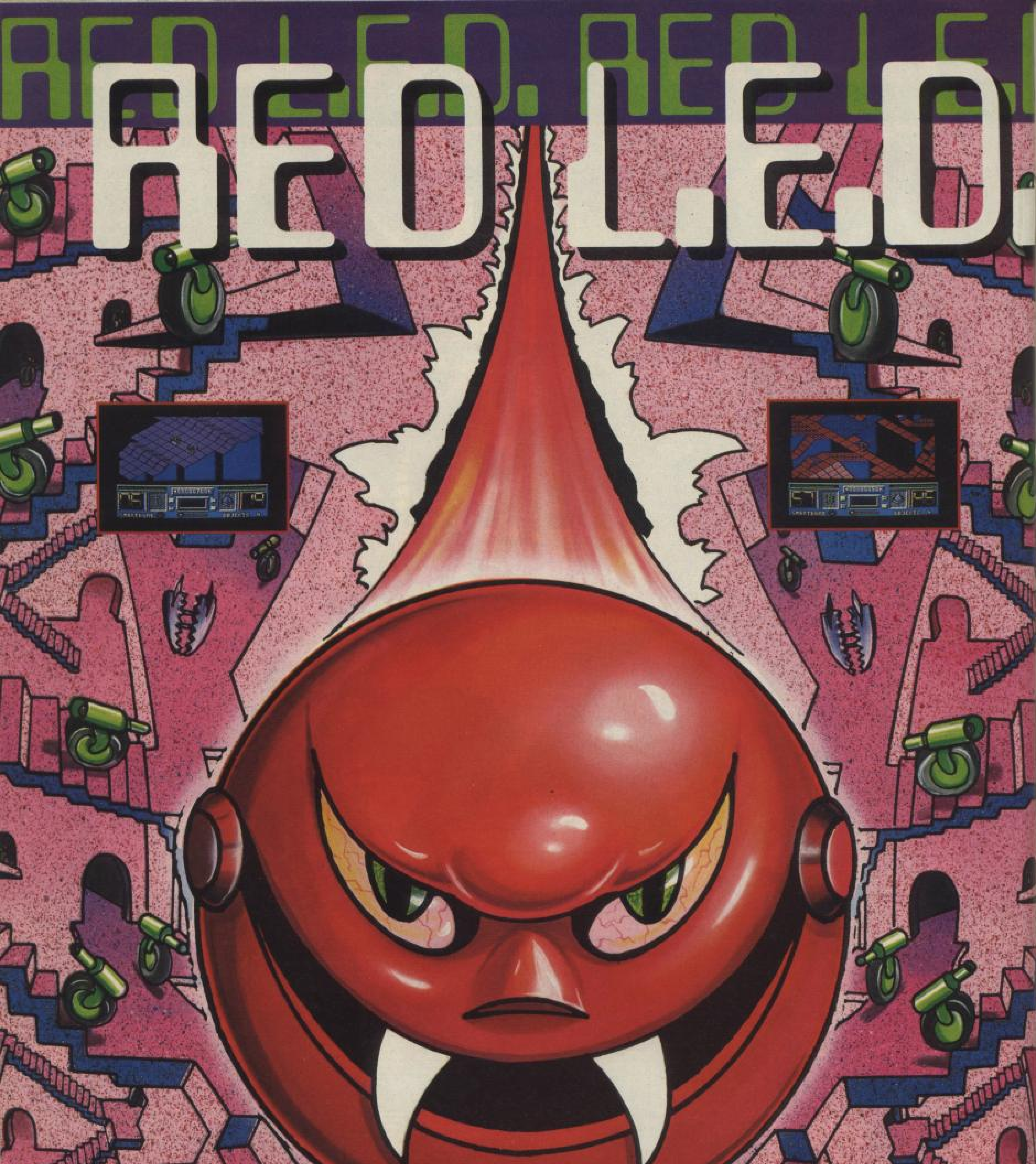
" On reading the instructions of Plexar **I was expecting a run-of-the-mill maze variant. I couldn't have been more wrong! The graphics are excellent, and though most of the moving characters are monochromatic the colourful backgrounds disguise this.** Plexar **is very simple and instantly playable, and it's surprising such a simple game can be so addictive. One of my favourite features appears on the later levels, where a new dimension is added to the game – not only is there a tricky maze on the ground, but there's also one above you which has to be navigated upside down! Yet again M.A.D. has come up with an outstanding game – get it as soon as you can. "**

90%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: excellent; mainly monochromatic, decorative surroundings in colour
Sound: nothing inspiring
General rating: a neat and enjoyable Trailblazer **clone**

Presentation	84%
Graphics	88%
Playability	86%
Addictive qualities	88%
OVERALL	**86%**



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- Sound FX by Tony Crowther.

STARLIGHT SOFTWARE

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MARKETED BY ARIOLASOFT

OCEAN CONQUEROR

Producer: **Rack-It**
Retail price: **£2.99**
Authors: **Lajos Palanki, Peter Vitray**

Doing the Captain Birdseye bit with a lot of hairy sailors while travelling beneath the ocean waves may not be everyone's idea of fun – but if you're a submariner then it's all in a wet day's work.

As Captain, Rear-Admiral, Vice-Admiral, or Admiral – the choice is yours – you're at periscope depth and intent upon destroying four convoys, each consisting of a freighter and two destroyers. These are supplying enemy troops based on islands in the region, and should the supplies get through, you've lost the war. Destroy your enemies and return to dock within 18 hours and you're the victor.

A variable magnification periscope occupies the top of the screen through which view approaching freighters, destroyers, drilling rigs, lighthouses, and islands are seen. As an added difficulty, fog may blunt the periscope, but the radar and sonar displays provide essential information on nearby targets, and further aid may be called upon – a map shows convoy coordinates and those of docks.

At the screen's centre, indicators further enhance your navigational capabilities by showing the level of water beneath the keel, the directional bearing of the craft, its rudder angle, speed of climb through the water and velocity. Seeing as how the latter's maximum is a nip over 20 mph, it's thoughtful of the programmers to have avoided tedium in long stretches of empty water by allowing travel in accelerated time.

Diving and surfacing is regulated by ballast tanks which contain either compressed air or water, so that the sub rises or sinks. Compressed air is produced by an on-board diesel motor, (which also recharges the sub's batteries). If there's insufficient air for the ballast tanks then the sub cannot elevate to the surface.

The sub's arsenal comprises a stock of forward firing torpedoes and antiship missiles which can be launched and guided to targets in any direction. Any destroyed enemy freighters or destroyers are added to your tally of victims, but your own vessel is also vulnerable to collisions and missile hits from enemy destroyers. The extent of damage is indicated on a status panel. Two of the islands contain docks where the submarine can be repaired, refuelled and rearmed; a guidance display shows the distance from the nearest dock once you're within a mile of it.

ROBIN

" Ocean Conqueror **is in a similar vein to Hewson's simulation release** Evening Star **(reviewed on page 28) in that it takes a while before you can actually get anywhere. The instructions explain all the controls in detail but this doesn't seem to help that much. I spent ages just figuring how to get out of the dock. Once that initial frustration is overcome the game improves tremendously. Graphically it's nothing amazing, but the 3-D graphics are effectively used for islands and other objects. It's tricky to get into and potential buyers may be put off, but perseverance is its own reward, and** Ocean Conqueror **is the best submarine simulation to date. "**

80%

NICK

" Periscope up, full speed ahead. Ocean Conqueror **is a really good submarine simulation. Once you've managed to get out of port the whole game explodes with addictiveness. Lighthouses, islands and even the odd convoy come into your periscopes view. A bit of lining up and away goes a torpedo and KABOOM (got that from** Batman . . . **) the ship is sunk, but keep your eye on the radar because you're about to travel over a coral reef! There are a few well-drawn islands out there too.** Ocean Conqueror **will appeal to most people, even if your burning ambition isn't owning your own submarine. "**

72%

MIKE

" As a simulation, Ocean Conqueror **appears quite accurate. The graphics are far from visually stunning, but they're effective and attractive. Strategy is an integral part of doing well, and though the instrumentation appears daunting at first, once understood the game is pretty easy to play – not so easy to succeed in, though! A likable game, worth considering for your collection. "**

79%



THE NEW LABEL

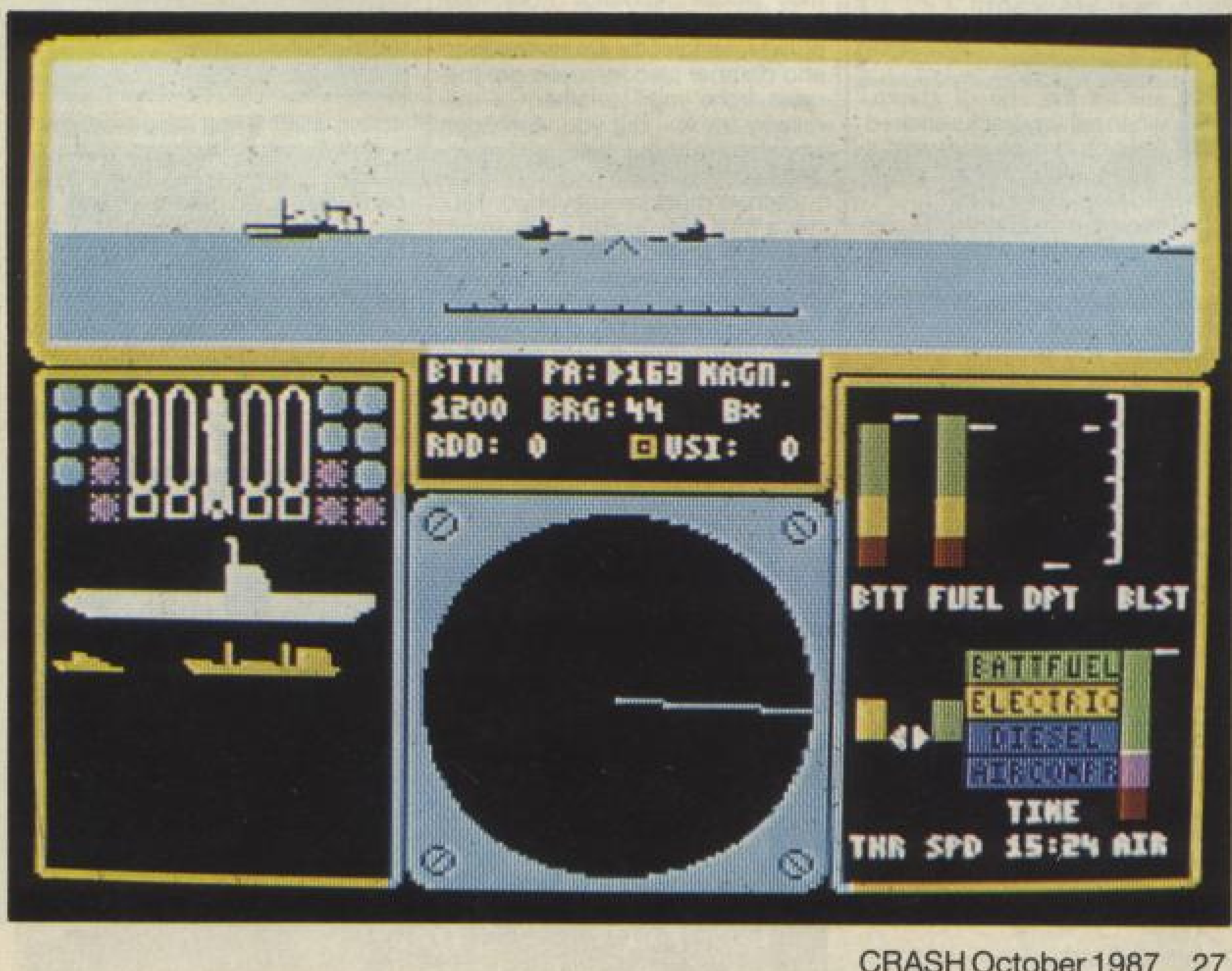
Rack-It is a new budget label from Hewson which was launched on 17 September. With increasing attention to 16-bit machines, Hewson feels there's an increasing need to provide pocket-money-price games for the 8-bit machines. Rack-It games are aimed at the £3 mark to allow a financial margin for developing more sophisticated programs than a £1.99 price would allow. There are two other programs in the first release schedule: *Draughts Genius* (reviewed on page 29) and the shoot-'em-up *Anarchy*, available soon.

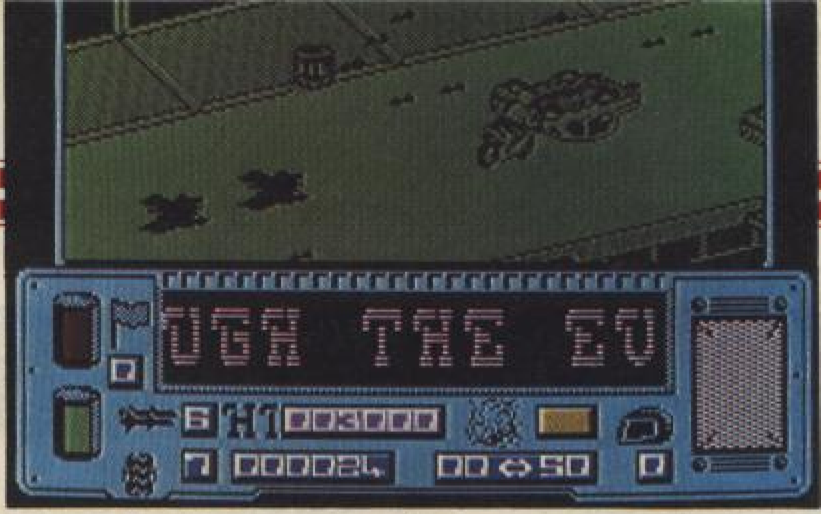
COMMENTS

Joysticks: Sinclair
Graphics: 3-D, not stunning but functional
Sound: atmospheric beeps
Options: fog on/off, four skill levels
General rating: the best submarine simulation in the fleet

Presentation	79%
Graphics	69%
Playability	70%
Addictive qualities	78%
OVERALL	**77%**

► **Searching for a yellow submarine in** *Ocean Conqueror*





MEAN STREAK

Producer: **Mirrorsoft**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Dalali Software**

Think once, think twice, think bike – for in *Mean Streak* they're going to be coming after you, on this Sunday afternoon ride with a difference.

You're out there on the road, minding your own business, when a succession of computer-controlled psychopathic bikers try to bump and bore you off your two-wheeled chariot. And if that fails, they're not averse to taking a pot shot at you.

But you're not standing for that. You too can push attackers off the roadway, or get behind them and blow them away using the guns and missiles you just happen to be carrying.

But these fiendish bikers who have never passed a proficiency test in their lives aren't the only dangers lurking on the streets. Scattered across the blacktop are tin tacks to puncture tyres, rocks and oil slicks that can send you careering and make you vulnerable to an opponent's nudge, ramps that have to be cleared, walls that can flatten a face, and gaping holes the council have forgotten. Lose control of your machine and you end up as an accident statistic with one of your three lives gone.

To avoid these odious obstacles, the bike can accelerate or slow down, be swung across the road or leap into the air.

► **The** ***Mean Streak*** **battletrack (just past the Milton Keynes turning)**

ROBIN

" At first Mean Streak **looks very promising, but successive plays reveal a lack of real substance. The graphics are simple but effective; it's the jerky scrolling that lets it down slightly. Here's a game requiring little in the way of instructions, and so it's easy to get into and enjoyable for a while, but I wouldn't describe it as addictive and it turns out to be a bit too frustrating – on several occasions when my player was killed off the exact cause of death was a bit dubious.** Mean Streak **offers some good ideas but repetitious gameplay and some slipshod programming knock it down a lot of points "**

64%

PAUL

" I was immediately taken back to the days of Spy Hunter**, speeding down the city streets blasting down all and sundry. It's a pity that there seems to have been little progress since those days. I had the impression Dalali plumped for monochrome graphics and diagonally-scrolling play area just to make the game more up to date. The shoddy implementation results in inaccurate collision-detection, making the game unplayable for the most part. While the bikers are well-animated and drawn with plenty of detail, the rest of the graphics seem to have been forgotten – and they're very average.**

53%

BEN

" Mean Streak**'s an odd game. It resembles virtually all the other diagonally-scrolling games in feel and difficulty of control; somehow, though, Dalali Software has succeeded in making it playable. After a few lengthy plays I'm well stuck in and probably will be for an hour or two to come. The controls are a pain – fair enough, eight moves on one joystick isn't bad, but in a panic it's frighteningly easy to jump when you want to fire a missile. Nice graphics, nice gameplay, nice presentation – overall** Mean Streak **is a nice game. "**

75%

EVENING STAR

Producer: **Hewson**
Retail price: **£7.95**

Back to the age of steam, when railway tracks snaked through the country and a British Rail sandwich had never been made, let alone eaten . . .

The eponymous *Evening Star* is a robust locomotive which makes the tricky run between Bath and Bournemouth on the Somerset And Dorset Line. In Hewson's simulation, you are the smoke-stained driver of this triumph of engineering. Your object is to reach Bournemouth on schedule, earning points for safety and economy.

The main screen shows the progress of the *Evening Star* as it puffs beneath bridges, huffs through tunnels and dashes past places luxuriating in such names as Wellow, Chilcompton, Henstridge and Binegar. But don't spend too long gazing at the countryside – there are heavy penalties for running late, especially if you choose to take out the flagship service, the Pines Express.

You control the train using a regulator for speed and a cutoff for engine efficiency, which can be tested by checking the colour of the smoke coming from the engine's stack. Vacuum brakes, a blower, an injector and a fire door and damper also help you get the most from your leviathan of the railway track – but you won't get anywhere without water and coal, and supplies are limited.

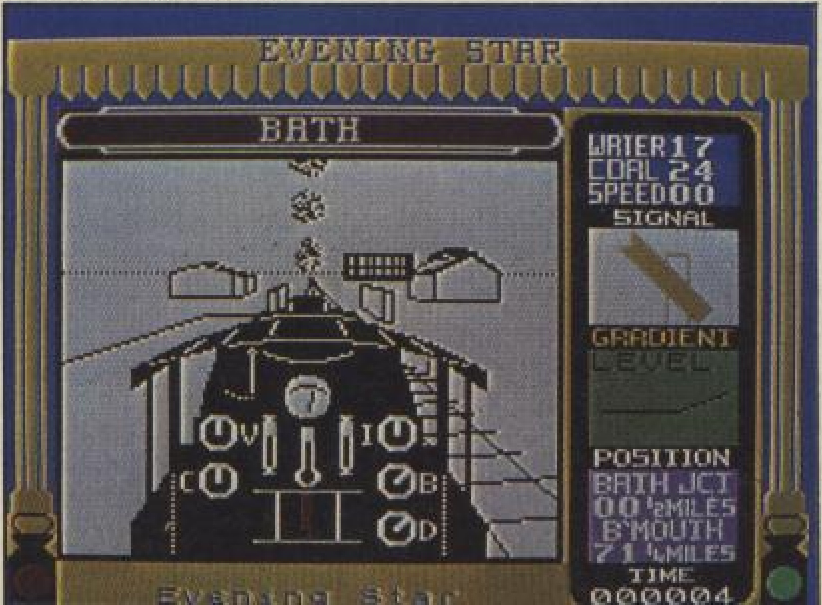
Signals must be obeyed, or you risk a fatal collision on a one-track line; and speed limits can deter your boyish enthusiasm for driving a steam train recklessly. They must be adhered to, or you could lose safety points, or even be derailed.

And don't forget the passengers – the *Evening Star* has to make stops. Overshooting the station can lose you points, and at Bournemouth you might hit the buffers; brake carefully, too, or the travellers will be thrown into each other's laps and injured.

The main object of *Evening Star* is to reach Bournemouth with enough points to pass; options allow you to challenge a time record or try to keep up with a strict timetable.

Hewson's (then Hewson Consultants') *Southern Belle*,

► **Star of stage and steam**



MIKE

" By today's standards the Southern Belle**ish graphics are a bit poor, with some huge jumps in the foreground. And though the accelerated-time facility is something of a godsend,** Evening Star **is by turns incredibly dull and far too complicated. If you're into trains and you haven't seen or played** Southern Belle**, you might find** Evening Star **fun; but it could almost be mistaken for a rerelease. "**

48%

PAUL

" So they've changed the name, but not much else is different from Southern Belle **– it's all the basic repetitive actions from the last train simulation and more! And though the idea is appealing, after one trip down to Bournemouth I didn't fancy another laborious jaunt. The vector drawings are competent, and complement the footplate controls perfectly. But graphics aren't really important in this kind of game – it's the atmosphere created by accuracy that matters. So dedicated train fans will love the feel of** Evening Star**, but you have to be an enthusiast to enjoy it. "**

70%

Advance warning of the problems ahead on the scrolling screen is given *Defender*-style by a radar screen showing a vertical view of the road section with the position of your bike and opponents displayed.

Fuel, oil, missiles and tyres are in limited supply, though there are engine-refreshment cans and missiles on the road.

There are three restart cones that can be picked up as you ride onward; should you succumb to an unwholesome end, a cone will allow you to restart from the point where you picked it up.

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: good main characters, marred by jerky scrolling
Sound: reasonable tune and spot FX
General rating: an above-average game that could have achieved much more with improved playability

Presentation	64%
Graphics	66%
Playability	67%
Addictive qualities	63%
OVERALL	**64%**

another locomotive simulation, received 84% Overall in CRASH Issue 20 two years ago.

NICK

" This one is more for the simulation buffs than the arcade freaks – it takes you half an hour just to digest the instructions! Some parts are quite playable, but don't buy Evening Star **unless you're a train buff with a desire to control a steaming beauty. "**

39%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: simple, slow-moving vector graphics; monochromatic play area, colour on gauges and borders
Sound: only the *phweeep* of the steam whistle . . .
Options: a choice of eight levels presenting different problems; a computer-controlled run is also available
General rating: a detailed steam-train simulation for the buffs, very similar to *Southern Belle*

Presentation	60%
Graphics	54%
Playability	61%
Addictive qualities	49%
OVERALL	**53%**

DRAUGHTS GENIUS

Producer: **Rack-It**
Retail price: **£2.99**
Authors: **Raffaele Cecco, Pablo Malnati, Giovanni Zanetti**

Playing draughts against a confirmed megagenius like Einstein could be a humiliating experience. Are you man or woman enough to do it?

Easy, you think – so, as you face Einstein across the draughtboard in the professor's front room (decoration by Oxfam . . .), the battle of two great minds begins.

But even Einstein is beatable; there are eight skill levels in this draughts challenge, one of the first releases on Hewson's new Rack-It budget label. If he's thinking too hard you can hurry him up by pressing Q, and on noticing a fatal mistake you can cancel the last move!

ROBIN

" Games seem to be heading back to the past, what with Breakout **variants,** Battleships **and now draughts – where has originality gone? Still,** Draughts Genius **has everything you could possibly ask of a game based on draughts. The graphics are reasonable, with some nice attention to detail, and the computer offers a mean game – but remember you can buy a draughts set for about this price and the board can double as a chessboard! "**

57%

NICK

" Don't think this is just another boring draughts game – it's full of cute little animated sequences (like all the programming team dancing around the piano at the start, and the things Einstein does when he wins and loses). Colour is used well and the background on the main screen is fantastic. Underneath the fancy stuff there's a first-class draughts game with useful skill levels, and even if you're no good at draughts you can use the cheats to win in Draughts Genius! **"**

69%



To move, position the cursor on the piece you want to move, press the space-bar, transfer the cursor to the square you want to move *to*, and press the space-bar again to actually make the move. A counter shows how many moves you are into the game.

The crowd is breathless as everyone waits for Einstein's response. Then it's your turn to put the professor in a predicament again. If the chance arises try a multiple move, skipping like some demented leapfrogger across Albert's men and thus removing them from the board. (To make a multiple move, press the space-bar *twice* after moving the cursor to your target square.)

Impatient Einstein will tell you when it's your move and when it's his. And on winning or losing, you are either applauded by the genius or ridiculed for your pea-brained incompetence.

MIKE

" Draughts Genius is good fun, and a worthwhile buy at not much more than a draughts set. The one-move-back trick is a good cheat, and Einstein is quite amusingly animated. This is worth getting, even though I can't beat Level 6. "

79%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: good perspective on the board, and attractive surrounds
Sound: tune to go with the opening dance routine
Options: eight skill levels
General rating: good implementation of draughts

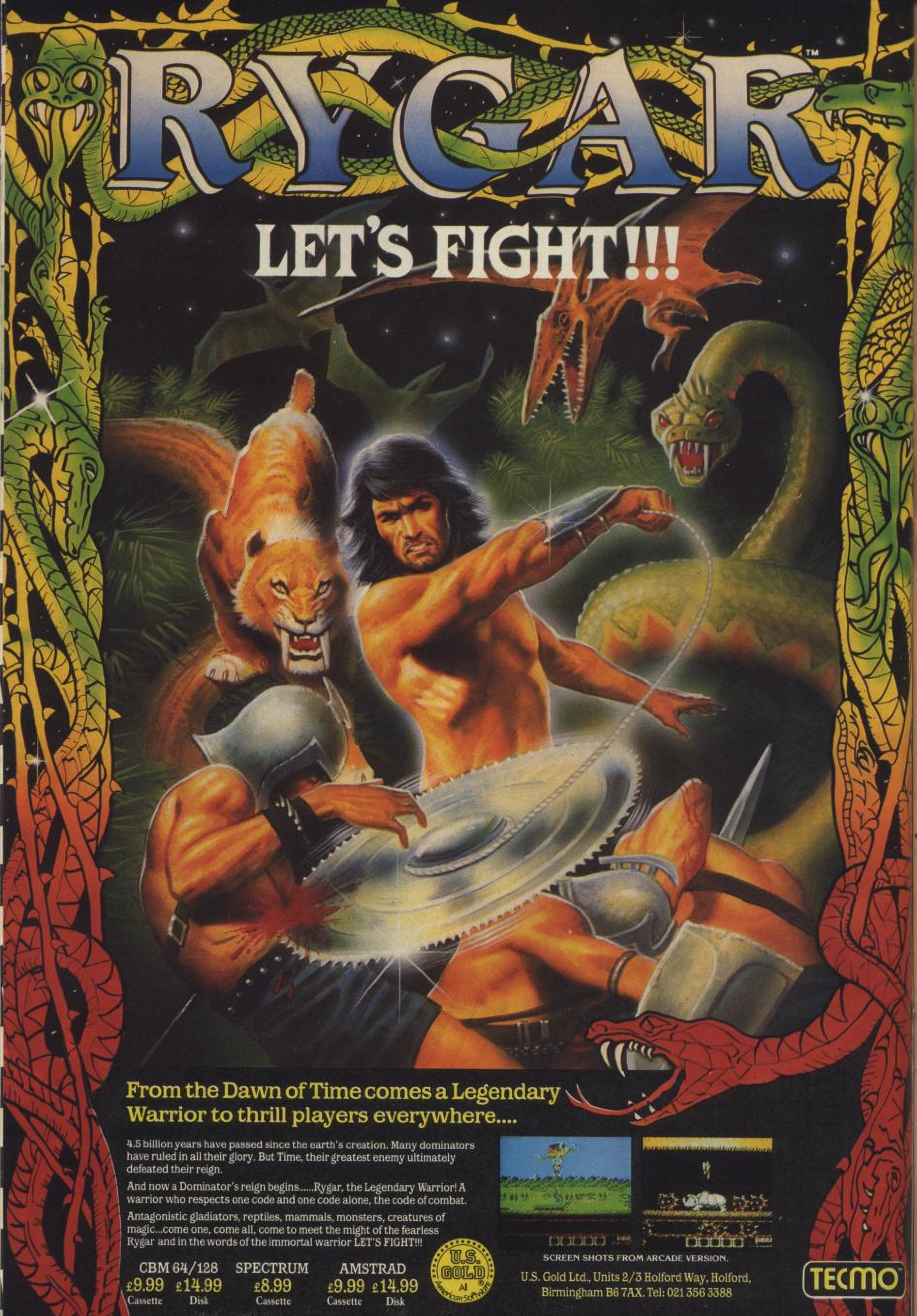
Presentation	74%
Graphics	71%
Playability	68%
Addictive qualities	64%
OVERALL	**68%**

► **Einstein takes a well-earned break from relativity**





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LLOYD MANGRAM'S FORUM



Once again, my pigeoncave groaned under the weight of mail, and nearly all of it lashing back at the *Barbarian* backlash. On behalf of Oliver Frey and the rest of the CRASH team, may I thank everyone who wrote in support of the cover. (Speaking of which, rumours that I modelled for the *Renegade* cover simply aren't true, it was Roger Kean did it – well his arms anyway, Robin Candy's washboard stomach was required for the . . . stomach I suppose). But I just couldn't face another massive *Barbarian* debate column again, so I moved on to the remaining letters, and from those, here's this month's pick, with Letter Of The Month first, earning its sender £30 worth of software.

RUNNING AWAY

Lloyd
Do you remember me moaning about consoles in Issue 39? There seems to be a general agreement on my main point; that whilst the consoles can make noisy explosions and pretty colours, the Spectrum and other home computers will still be popular because they are better suited to the development of original games.

So where are the original games?

Issue 44 contains reviews of 28 games (not counting strategy and adventure, but there weren't any really innovative ideas in those departments either). Three were sport simulations. Eight were arcade-adventures. A massive 13 were pure arcade action, mostly shoot-'em-ups (this is the computer that isn't suited to arcade conversions, remember?). That leaves only four original games; *Rebel*, *Mercenary*, *Satcom* and *Stifflip & Co.* 24 very unoriginal games out of 28 opportunities for exciting new ideas seems a bit of a waste to me.

The strange thing is that two of the four were Smashed, and *Rebel* also received a very good rating. Of the arcade-clones, only two of the 24 (*Joe Blade* and *Renegade*) received marks high enough to justify purchase.

The cause of this glut of boring games? Well, I suppose the culprit is the inevitable way in which the industry has become more and more commercialised. It makes me sad to say it, but I don't think the magic enthusiasm that made the Spectrum what it is (was ?) is there anymore. You may consider this nostalgia on the part of a veritable old crumbly of 16, but I long for the days of the involved adventure quests of *Dun Darach* and *Dragontorc*, when Ocean released unlicensed titles and every game contained a new idea. But now it appears it is safer to churn out an average shoot-'em-up with a snazzy title, preferably backed up by an advertisement featuring a semi-naked girl.

Gargoyle have stopped making their classic problem-solving games and switched to arcade games with FTL. Ocean have decided to spend their resources on finding licences rather than on game development. And, though this is a minor point, it is symptomatic of the commercial trend; CRASH has departed from tradition and featured non-Smashes on covers. *Renegade* and *Barbarian* were used, I believe, because the images they presented were better for selling magazines. *Enduro Racer* was featured rather than the fantastic and totally original *Sentinel*. Now, it's not the fault of CRASH that the industry is growing more commercial, but the side-effects are dire. The original games now shine like dazzling beacons from the drab dullness of the arcade-clones and film/book/TV/cartoon/cuddly toy tie-ins.

It *is* a tragedy because programmers aren't running *out* of new ideas; they are running *away* from new ideas. And originality doesn't mean that a game can't be commercially successful. So please, programmers (and more importantly, software houses and distributors), please don't turn your backs on originality. It can be financially rewarding, and it will help to prolong the lively life of what Roger Kean has termed 'Arcade Computer Enjoyment' rather than the current phase of Licences, Empty Tie-ins & Horrendous Arcade-Ripoff Games in Computing. Programs should be ACE not LETHARGIC!

What do other readers, especially the more recent Spectrum owners, think about all this?
Anthony Bailey, Carshalton, Surrey

I don't regard your comments as being nostalgic, since nostalgia is usually seen as a state of looking fondly at the past in an uncritical way – you do seem to be trying to live in the present! As to the cover illustrations, you're both right and wrong, CRASH has featured the occasional non-Smashed game on the cover in the past, but it's true that games like Enduro Racer, Barbarian *and* Renegade *provided what was considered to be the best illustrative opportunities at the time.*

I would welcome some reactions to Anthony's letter; off the cuff, here's a couple of mine: I also think a lot of program developers are running away from ideas, because for an enthusiastic, inquisitive mind, it is just impossible to run out of ideas. And perhaps in the past Ocean could have been accused of thinking more about licences than the result, but I've detected a definite change in the company's policy towards game development recently (even towards arcade conversions). A lot of care, attention and polish seems to be the result, and they have had some very fine programs well rated lately.

Thanks for the letter Anthony, it isn't often I end up giving Letter of the Month to someone twice, but I felt your letter deserved it, so that's £30 worth of software for you – I hope there's something available you really would enjoy having . . .
LM

BORED

Dear Lloyd
I've had (yawn) enough! CRASH is just so (yawn) boring. Where's the controversy, sparkle, excitement or humour?

The reviews: these are just so drab. Don't think just because you've splashed a lot of colour around that they're lively now, they're just so monotonous and predictable. The reviewers don't have enough space to express themselves properly, the result being that they all just burble on about how good/bad/average the game is and not a lot else. Why not give one reviewer three-quarters of the available space to get much deeper into the game and have the other two give a quick comment and their own percentages at the end? Also, take a lesson from ZZAP! The way they explain each percentage in a quick sentence or two is much more accurate and interesting.

General entertainment value of the mag is sinking. There is just no humour any more, what with Tamara leaving, Hannah disappearing and no real characters left in the mag ie no Angus Ryall (remember him?), Minson only getting a page and yourself on every second page. (August 43 you had 16 pages all to yourself). I've nothing against you but you can get a little much, ▶



month in month out, as everyone else would too, no matter how interesting they were. Even your Forum is getting totally boring. There's been no really angry or interesting letters for ages, no silly or funny ones and no controversial issues of any real issue. The *Barbarian* cover was only an excuse to be disgusting on the part of Oli, and stir up a little excitement it did, but still who cares? If you feel so strongly about the mag's cover, don't buy it! Newsfield will get the message soon enough!

Excitement: What's that? Apart from colour CRASH has become stagnant. Apart from that *OINK!* thing (did anyone find that amusing in the slightest?) CRASH has done nothing interesting for years. Perhaps it's because you are the market leader, and are resting on your laurels. (It's worked for the past four years, why shouldn't it keep on working?) Well I'm afraid you're going to start losing readers unless you break from the norm fast.

Please take note.

John Hay, Dornoch, Sutherland

No controversy, sparkle, excitement or humour? Reviews so drab? Well, it's only a personal opinion, of course, but as a fairly close CRASH watcher over the years, I'd say the reviews were more tightly written, more to the point and without any loss of humour or sparkle – but then, I'm biased. The magazine still gets through more reviews than almost any other comparable periodical, and manages to fit in numerous articles. Do you really want what you refer to as 'depth' in games reviews? Damn it all, they are reviews, not a replacement for your finding out what the games are about.

The entire tone of your letter suggests that no-one at CRASH has any regard for the reader other than taking their money off them. I suggest you have a go at producing a fanzine, as many CRASH readers do, and you might begin to realise just how much effort goes into every month's edition. And naturally, Oliver Frey just loves being disgusting, that's all he has time to do . . .

LM

CRASH BRITANNICA

Dear Lloyd Mangram

I've collected CRASH since Issue Five, but I have lost a few old and precious ones, and I was wondering if you could do a CRASH Encyclopedia containing all the games reviewed, and what they got (apart from *Sabrewulf* Ha Ha). Then you could average out the CRASH's all time top 50 greats, for the normal games, adventure and a top 20 for strategy. You could also ask the readers to vote for the best all time game from *Wheelie* to *Starglider*. You could have this free with one CRASH (Christmas Special) or put the price up to £1.50 for that issue.

Off the subject now, and I have been wondering, what has happened to Matthew Smith's new game *Attack Of The Mutant Zombie Flesh Eating Chickens From Mars*? I have seen the adverts in CRASH for a few months, and wondered if you knew anything, like was it to be a platform game?

Paul Coman (13), Barry, S Glamorgan

To some extent, I think we're about to answer your prayers Paul. Starting this issue there's the CRASH History with general details of events and software over four years. Additionally, the collectable series will be completed with a detailed index of all games over the period, and on top of that, plans are afoot for a special binder to enclose the whole which will probably have some extra special encyclopedic bits and bobs to go with it. Watch out for future issues!

Software Projects are being a mite cagey about Zombie Flesh Mutant-Eating Chickens Attack Mars *and indeed its creator, so we can only hope . . .*

LM

PLUS PROUD

Dear Lloyd

I'm a +2 owner and proud of it, and so are many others, but the trouble is you keep trying to avoid 128s in your reviews. A few games that I think are very good because of their enhancement are *180*, *Gauntlet*, *Strike*, *Army Moves* and *Enduro Racer*, but in your reviews there's nothing to be seen about enhancement.

Do you always try games on a 128?

For other 128 users I've compiled my Top Five 128 music chart.

1. *Glider Rider*
2. *Amaurote*
3. *Stormbringer*
4. *Leviathan*
5. *Starglider*

For sound FX *Amaurote* must be the best 128 game.

C O Fulcher, Thorney, Peterborough

The reviews do mention any significant differences between 128K games and 48K, and yes we do play them on both machines. However, I do feel a little more attention might be paid to the 128 end, but in fairness, there hasn't been that much to write about, other than those games you mention.

LM

MORE MUSIC

Dear Lloyd

I'm writing in response to your request for a chart of Spectrum music. This is for the best 48K tunes.

1. *Milk Race*
2. *Ghost Hunters*
3. *Agent X*
4. *Mikie*
5. *Terra Cresta*
6. *Renegade*
7. *Chronos*
8. *The Fifth Quadrant*
9. *Survivor*
10. *Rasterscan*

J T Charlton, Dover

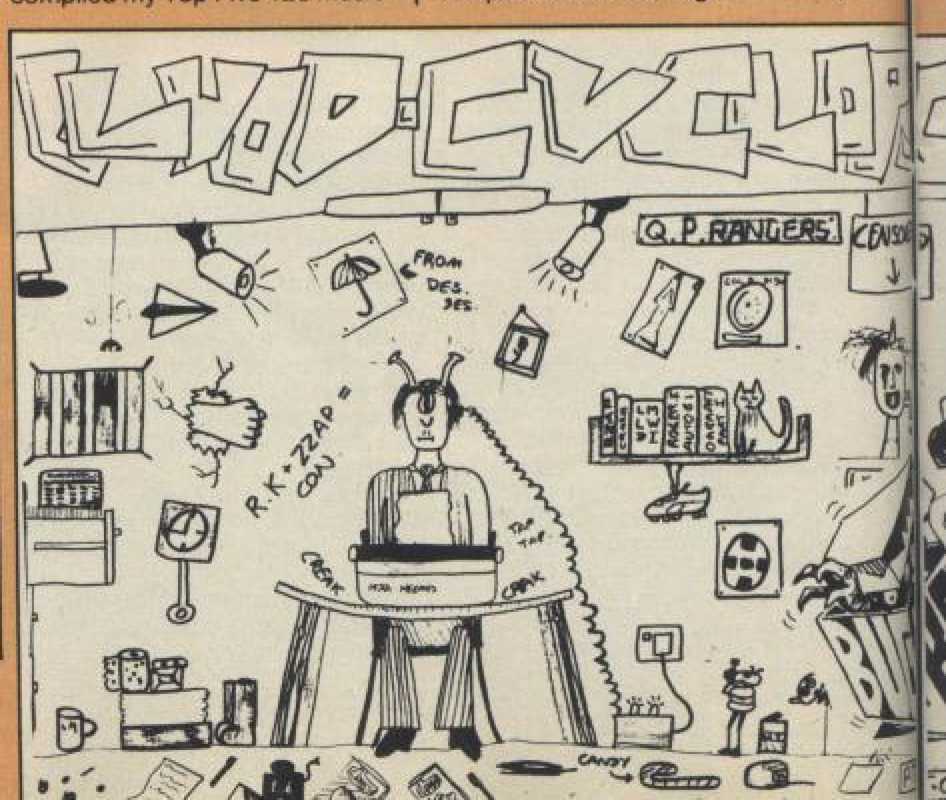
Any more computer deejays with charts?

LM

GOT THE VOTE

Dear Lloyd

Thank you for the Spectravideo Joyball I got with my subscription – it's great and works brill with a Ram Turbo Interface. Being new to computers I wanted a mag with the best information on software. So I paid out for four mags, *C&VG*, *Your Sinclair*, *Sinclair User* and CRASH. CRASH got my vote and my money for a sub, there was no competition in choosing.





Just a couple of things: what about a hardware surgery and previews on computer books, what do you think?
Andy Muirhead, Wilmslow, Cheshire

The only reason CRASH has avoided too much hardware or technical jiggery-pokery in books is that with every questionnaire, these subjects seem less and less popular. And most hardware is made in such a way that it's not really fit for surgery, more for the trashcan. Computers, of course, can be sent to reputable repair firms now.
LM

CRASH COVER UP

Dear Lloyd
This is the first letter I've written to CRASH, because I've never felt the need to before, but I believe credit should be awarded where it's due, so in recognition of this I must congratulate you on a most informative and very interesting all-colour magazine. It's brilliant. It's great. It's decent too.

Decent?

I say decent, because I saw through (wish I could) the sly, deluding artwork on the Imagine ad for *Game Over* (the one with the naughty bits some magazines have been trying to cover up – Issue 43, inside back cover). The artwork was cunningly done over the . . . um . . . naughty parts, they weren't just plastered with a big, ugly splurge of some company's trademark, as in some magazines. In CRASH the naughty bits were disguised under some devious and stylish artwork. Is Oli responsible?

Speaking of Oli, I think his artwork is absolutely amazing. I'm just astounded at the sheer volume of work he gets through in a month, considering he circulates between several other mags. His covers, with the added touch of the CRASH logo (don't change it) stand out among the other periodicals, making them look drab. So all the disrespectful ingrates who don't appreciate Oli's brilliance can go and *?$£%!!! And tell Oli not to feel discouraged and to keep up the good work.

And finally to sign off, I think the video reviews are a good idea, but you could review better-known films and also computer/film tie-ins. Also your Playing Tips section is very useful and helpful, but why do you wear a paper bag over your head?
S Alam Hannan (14), Wood Green, London

The Game Over ad was one of those things Oli just couldn't resist, and felt we should do our best to retain the original as much as possible, rather than slap a logo over the well-proportioned lady's superstructure detail. For the technically minded (as they say in photographic magazines) the added bra was done by tracing off the shape onto art paper, lightly painting a black outline of the detail, and then Oli air-brushed the shape in black ink. This small patch was shot to film and a mask made to hold back the offending part of the original in each colour layer. Then the new piece was added to the blue and red layers only.

Am I giving away a secret when I say that someone from Ocean rang Oli asking whether he had the bit of artwork that they could use to make a large poster from? Unfortunately, his touching up was only on a small scrap of paper and it had been thrown away!

I like wearing a paper bag.
LM

HOLE IN THE BACK

Dear Mr Mangram
Could you please explain to me, how to put POKEs into my computer, as I bought my computer second-hand, I didn't get a manual.

I've tried to put the POKEs into the computer, but I don't know when to put them in exactly. I've tried to put them in at the beginning, and some way through loading, but they never work. I have also tried to put them in through the MERGE" " but still they do not work.

Please help, I'm desperate.
Paul Watson, Stanley, Co Durham.

Paul Sumner says, there's a little hole in the back of the computer through which you stick them . . . no, he's joking. Actually, I'm surprised you're having trouble because it's really pretty simple. Unless otherwise stated in the Playing Tips POKE routines should be typed in before loading a game, checked thoroughly, RUN, and unless a DATA error occurs the game should then load complete with the POKEs firmly in place. Wherever that isn't the case, the tip almost always says so. Hope that helps.
LM

SAFE TO STARE

Dear Lloyd
I've just bought and read CRASH August 1987. My purchase of this edition was quite unintentional. I had meant to get the July issue with the *OINK!* pull-out in it. However, after reading the magazine I was no longer angry



BY NEIL THOMPSON
WHITCHURCH, BRISTOL



with myself for buying the wrong issue. I found your £1 mag well worth the money and, having only got a baby Spectrum, very addictive, enough so to want to go and update my Spectrum and try all the games you review so well.

Having finished with the praise, I wonder if you could help me. Do you know of any guidelines as to the legal or safe limit of staring at a television screen with regards to your eyesight. I work on an IBM at work, eight hours a day, and although I enjoy programming/playing games on my computer I'm a little concerned about my eyesight. Please could you advise me and other people to a safe guideline to using computers without damaging our eyesight.
Maria Lyne, Shoreham-By-Sea, Sussex

To be honest, Maria, no, I can't. I'm sure tons of research into the subject has been done, although the very little I've read sounds inconclusive and sometimes hysterically silly. Certainly screen static can cause eyestrain and headaches for some people susceptible to it, and I guess no-one thinks it entirely healthy to spend hours, weeks and years peering a little green, orange or white characters on a small screen. At CRASH we've ben staring at the darned things for well over three years (which probably explains why everyone keeps bumping into lampposts) with no discernable ill effects – but after fifteen years . . . I don't know. Often, I'm thankful for my good ol' Hermes.
LM

THE UNSWEET PILL

Dear Lloyd
I was very annoyed after reading your review of the new Spectrum+3. To start with it seemed like a good enough follow-up to the +2, despite a loss of memory in the RAM disk (nothing drastic). But I was really fuming when I found out half the add-ons made for the other true Speccies don't work on this inferior machine, and that the extra port in its back has been made specially for Amstrad hardware! How dare Alan Sugar stoop so low as to mutate our beloved (true) Spectrum into a half +2, half CPC/PCW! All Mr Sugar has done is to use the Sinclair logo to try to sell this new model, gladly I don't think it will.

Also what is happening to your rating boxes since 1986, looking through issue 34 there were seven headings for ratings, then it went down to six, but from issue 42 (last month) we were reduced to five: Presentation, Graphics, Playability, Addictive qualities, and Overall.

What has happened? Has everyone's brain been worn out by the big calculation or something?
Paul Smith, Kendal, Cumbria

PS I thought the *Barbarian* cover of Issue 41 was really good, and if the people who complained about it were annoyed, I would advise them to take a look at some back issues of ZZAP! for some really gruesome pictures!

Perhaps the real points about the +3 will only emerge when people start buying it in great numbers, but there's a lot of right to the argument that whereas Sinclair created an entire industry out of his machine, Amstrad are determined to keep as much of it to themselves as possible, and probably to its detriment in the long run.

Changes in the review ratings have been explained in each issue where they changed, but the plain fact is that over the years the original CRASH ratings have become outdated. I think it's fair to say that the current ones, and the comments too, fit the bill better now.
LM

BUGGED!

Dear Lloyd
When I read about a small fanzine and their extreme political views I felt I had to write and express my views on such an apparently blatant exercise by a few people to get some cheap publicity.

The Bug shows some alarming traits in its encounter with Creative Sparks. The most alarming one was politics in computing 'Politics!' I first thought when reading your article The Bug That Roared, August edition. Since when has politics had anything to do with computing for fun?

Since the average age of CRASH readers is 16 years they are too young to vote, naive to politics and impressionable to such material as published by *The Bug*.

In addition to this *The Bug* and its political standing is also questionable. Note what Jaron Lewis said about Mrs Thatcher's contribution to their series on famous people.

I bet he wouldn't say that to Mr Kinnock's contribution.

May I remind you what politics has done to sport over the last two decades. What I'm suggesting is that as soon as politics gets into computing for fun then it would be ruined beyond repair.

From what I have read *The Bug* deserves to go out of business. I'm sorry if that sounds too harsh, but maybe it might do some good to the software industry as a whole.
Michael Thomas (16), Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

I don't agree that 16-year-olds are naive on politics, but I certainly do agree that party and unionist politics should have no place in computer gaming. That's a pretty strong statement, Michael, so it's fitting that I have here a reply from The Bug *themselves . . .*
LM

LETTER FROM THE BUG

Dear Lloyd
After reading Tony Worrall's letter last issue we thought it necessary to reply, on behalf of the Editorial Team, to some of the points raised.

At present there are about thirty fanzines being published; how Tony can claim to represent them in his letter is beyond our understanding, especially as he has just entered the scene. *The Bug* is the longest surviving fanzine, we have just celebrated our third birthday, and like Tony we publish for love and not money. All profits are ploughed back into the magazine, and it is written after school and at weekends. The main objective is to provide an independent magazine which features un-biased editorial.

We have also gone through 'blood, sweat and tears' to produce issues of the magazine, as has nearly every other fanzine. There's no point Tony moaning about it, if you can't take the pressure, give up. Nobody forces you to make a fanzine.

We respect a software house's decision not to send us software, however, we see no reason why we should feature a company's games if they don't send them. If they wished to have a game featured it would be sent and not doing so clearly shows a wish not to have the product reviewed.

The Bug is not run by Jeffrey Davy as stated but by an Editorial Team. Perhaps if Tony had looked at our magazine or read the CRASH article properly he would have not made such a mistake. The Editorial Team does not support any particular political party. A magazine which fights prejudice, whether it be sexism, heterosexism, racism or any other prejudice, is not 'loony' as so crudely stated, merely humane. To see how this makes a difference why not send 40p and an SAE to us at *28 Leaside Avenue, London N10 3BU*

CSD were in the wrong as our contract stated we would have complete editorial freedom. They breached the contract and knew it. I think this proves we do the magazine for the readers and *not* the money. If we had obeyed their orders and kept the contract (until they went bust) we would have put money before the readers. We have been supported by many people in the industry for standing up to CSD, we did not give fanzines a bad name and were not bought-off by 'the hand that feeds'.

During the contract, our circulation was at 1,500 copies per issue, the advertising rates at the time reflected this high circulation. The advertising revenue went to pay for essential things like the phone bill and postage costs. If we were engaging in 'blatant profiteering' as stated we would not use the phone to obtain review copies and our service to the readers would suffer. Once again we were putting the readers before money. If Tony thinks fanzines should stick together, and that we should have charged a lower rate, why does he write letters like he did?

Towards the end of the letter Tony quoted Jeffrey Davy's view on a single fanzine making a difference. Obviously this was at the end of the letter and he was getting so into slagging us off he did not even think about the idea. A smaller number of fanzines with bigger circulations would have a lot more impact that many smaller ones, all saying different things. He may not like *The Bug*, but that does not mean that everything we say is rubbish.

Publishing nit-picking letters, such as you did, does absolutely nothing to further the interests of fanzines. Tony seems to call us hypocrites yet if we behaved the way he seems to want us to, we would be putting money before the readers. If this is what his magazines does, I think some self-analysis is in order before he calls us hypocrites.
Jaron Lewis & Jeffrey Davy - Members of Editorial Team, The Bug.

I feel I have to defend my right to publish letters from readers with opinions, no matter how muddled or obnoxious their contents may seem to offended people. And in defence of The Bug*'s editorial team, I'm only too well aware of how office overheads eat the money and force a profit-consciousness on anyone who undertakes a venture like this, no matter how small it may be.*
LM

A RITMAN RITES

To all CRASH readers
I feel I must write and thank all those readers who put my last three games simultaneously into the Hotline Top 20 chart for the August issue. Possibly the nicest compliment is *Matchday* at number six, almost three years after it was launched. Thank you!
Jon Ritman, London, N18

Go on Jon, rub it in, I know that's the one we didn't Smash when we probably should have . . . !
LM

Well that's my lot for this month. Soon CRASH Towers will be silent, the Spectrums will be stilled, the Cubs caged and the joysticks boxed. No, it's not the Christmas holidays, just that everyone will be down in London at the PCW Show (where, thanks to the miracle of publishing schedules, you could be reading these very words). So I'll have the entire place to myself – luxury. And if I get bored, I'll read some more of your letters, the ones you send to LLOYD MANGRAM, THE CRASH FORUM, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*


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ocean
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There's been an explosion in martial-arts sims since *The Way Of The Exploding Fist*, as RICKY EDDY and ROBIN CANDY observe in this good beat-'em-up guide. And the ninjas just won't lie down – all they want to do is . . .

KICK HIGH

THOSE BEAT-'EM-UPS IN FULL

The Way Of The Exploding Fist
Fist II
Gladiator
Yie Ar Kung Fu
Yie Ar Kung Fu II
International Karate
The Way Of The Tiger
Amazon Women
Kung-Fu Master
Ninja
Uchi Mata
Barbarian
Kick Boxing
Ninja Hamster
Renegade
Sai Combat

THEY STARTED three years ago, when Bug Byte revealed an interesting little number called *Kung Fu*. It was an admirable wireframe attempt to produce a martial-arts simulation – 'probably the most unusual game to be seen on the Spectrum for a long while,' said CRASH in amazement.

But sceptics thought the genre would never catch on. It took Melbourne House to show them the way – *The Way Of The Exploding Fist*, which sold more than 150,000 copies for the Spectrum and nearly half a million across all formats.

Since then, nothing's kept the combat games down. They've been grotesque (*Barbarian*), skilful (*Fist*) and downright silly (*Ninja Hamster*).

The genre soon caught the nickname 'beat-'em-ups', as the gameplay always involves a player beating up his opponent, whether the computer or another player.

And with the advent of the 128s and their improved sound chips, the fighting effects became more hideous – the most disturbing beat-'em-up sounds must be the animal squeals in *Ninja Hamster*.

But most of these martial-arts simulations are so unrealistic, set in pseudo-Oriental fantasy worlds, that it's just harmless surrogate violence – and everyone likes a bit of that.

NINJA HAMSTER

CRL

62% Issue 43

ROBIN ■ After many years abroad, Ninja Hamster returns to his homeland to find it overrun by evil creatures. Your mission as the Ramboesque rodent is to defeat them all in turn.

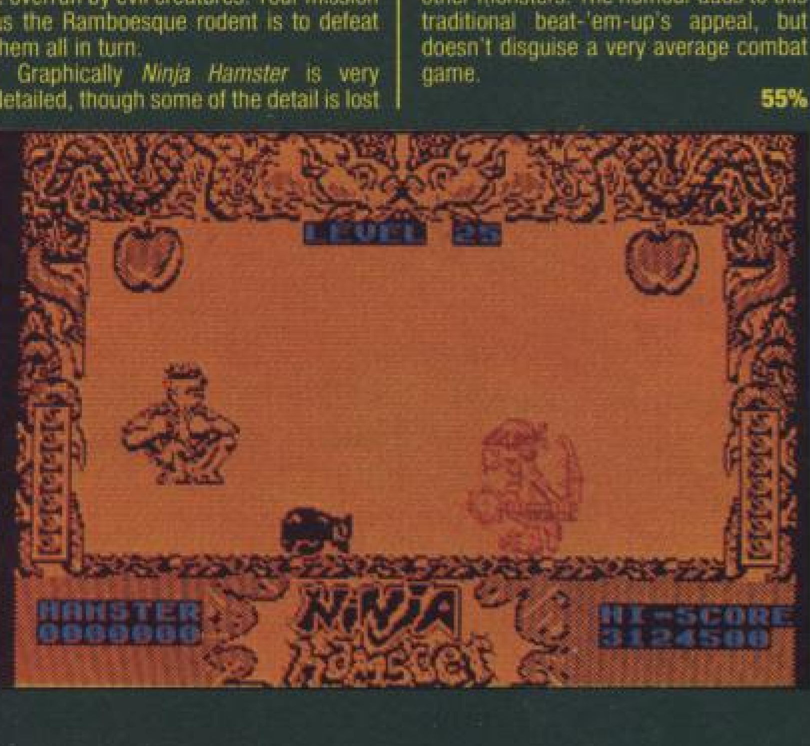
Graphically *Ninja Hamster* is very detailed, though some of the detail is lost when the fighting begins. And it's easy to get into, despite problems with the keyboard – there are so many keys needed.

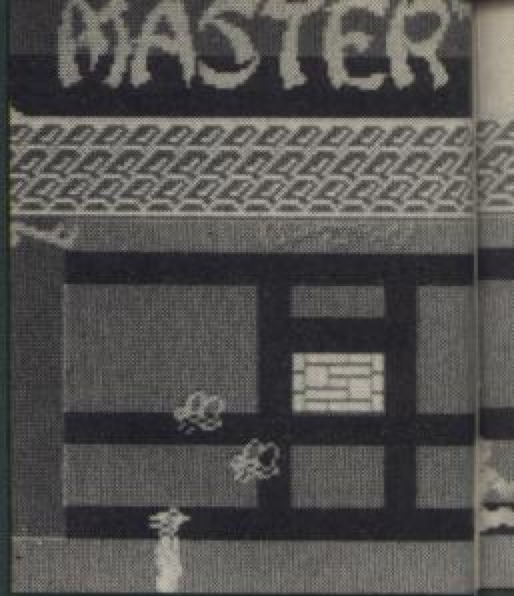
I feel *Ninja Hamster* was slightly underrated in the CRASH review; it makes a good beat-'em-up, though it doesn't leave any lasting impression.

70%

RICKY ■ And you thought hamsters were cute? Dig this baby for one hell of a fighting rodent, saving a village from Sinister Rat, Loony Lobster and a host of other monsters. The humour adds to this traditional beat-'em-up's appeal, but doesn't disguise a very average combat game.

55%





KUNG-FU MASTER

US Gold

56% Issue 31

ROBIN ■ In this conversion of a coin-op original, you have to rescue a fair damsel from the evil clutches of a wizard. As the eponymous master, you progress through five levels fighting off other kung fu warriors and assorted monsters conjured up by the wizard's sorcery.



BARBARIAN

Palace

85% Issue 41

RICKY ■ Scream! Maria Whittaker!! Pornography!!! There was great moral outrage over the luscious lady who advertised this Gothic horror beat-'em-up – and over the notorious CRASH cover.

Fight your way through screens of beautifully animated bashing action to release Princess Marina from the evil Drax . . .

When you knock off an opponent in *Barbarian*, a deformed lizard creature trundles the body away. Little touches like this make the game worthwhile, though experts may find it a bit simple.



Moves for attack and defence can be accessed quite easily.

I was never impressed by the arcade game of *Kung-Fu Master*, and US Gold's conversion is terrible. Graphically it's inept, with attribute problems and flickery animation, and the gameplay is very boring. Though the arcade original was run-of-the-mill, a lot more could have been made of this licence.

49%

RICKY ■ I didn't think much of the coin-op *Kung-Fu Master*, and this is no improvement – *Scooby Doo* is a better game along similar lines.

38%



Still, *Barbarian* is one of my top combat games; *Fist* is wearing a bit thin these days.

Now programmer Steve Brown is developing *Barbarian II* . . .

90%

ROBIN ■ *Barbarian* is one of the best beat-'em-ups I've played. Most of the graphics are monochromatic, but this enhances the game rather than detracting from the super-smooth animation.

It's instantly playable, and for such a simple idea it's surprisingly addictive. The two-player game is one of the best features of *Barbarian* – you can invite your friends round for a slice'n'dice party. So if you want nothing more than a straightforward brutal fighting game, this is the one to get.

85%

FIST II
Melbourne House

58% Issue 38

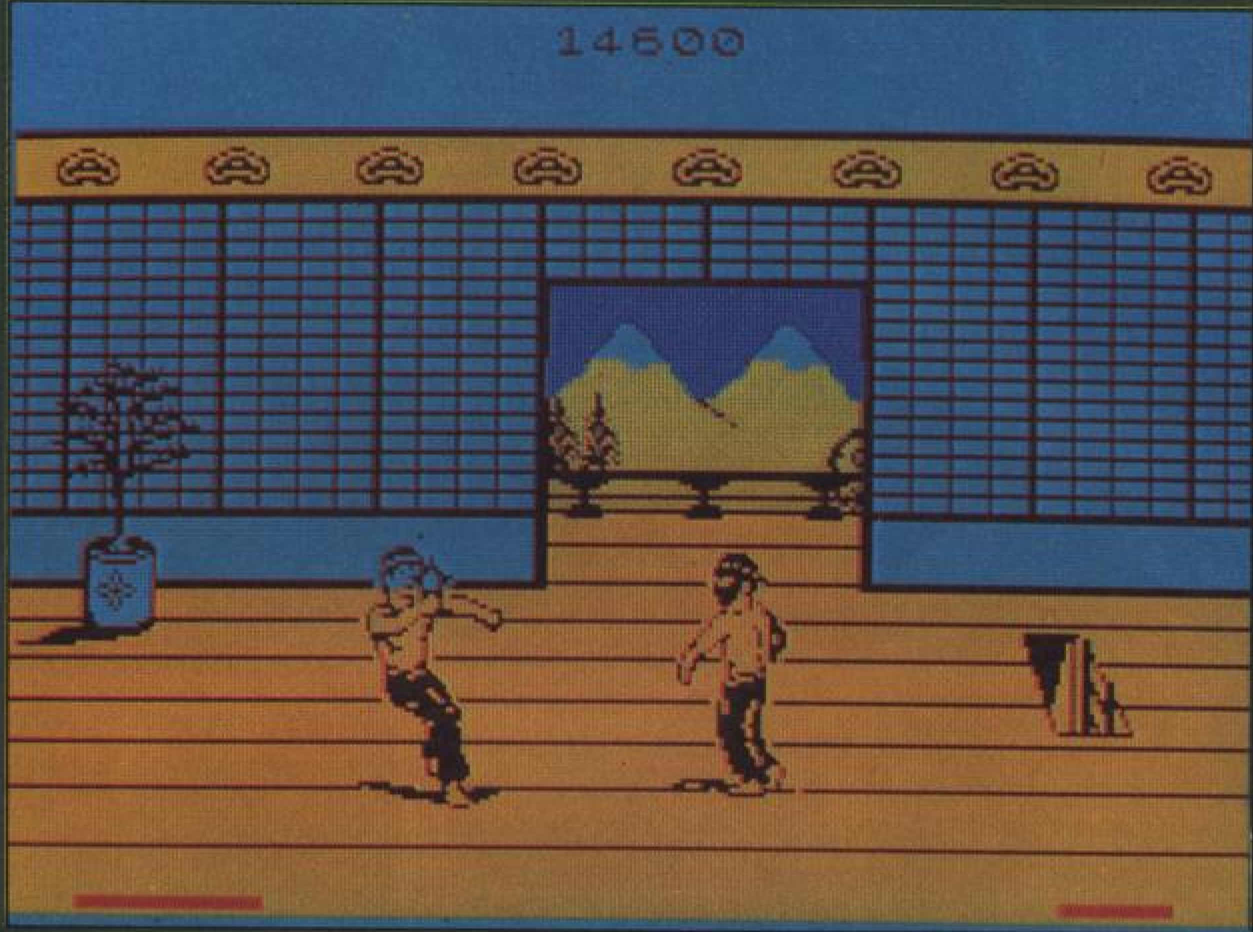
ROBIN ■ Two years after the success of *The Way Of The Exploding Fist*, Melbourne House released this follow-up. The warriors of *Exploding Fist* have been betrayed and their homeland has been conquered by an evil warlord. The player must find the temple of the religion of the Exploding Fist, and thus gain power to overthrow the tyrant.

Fist II was a disappointment – it consists largely of walking around the many locations looking for an adversary to bash up. The fight sequences are enjoyable, but the long periods between bouts are tedious.

54%

RICKY ■ A poor follow-up to the sensational original, *Fist II* lacks the compulsion of *The Way Of The Exploding Fist*. The background scenery repeats itself often, and there's not enough variety in the gameplay.

48%



YIE AR KUNG FU
Imagine

92% Issue 25

RICKY ■ From Konami's coin-op game comes a Smashing conversion. As the right 'onerable Oolong, you've got to become a kung fu master – so it's just as well you have 16 moves at your disposal as you battle with nine opponents past the well-drawn backgrounds.

This is a good traditional karate game that stood up well when first released in early 1986. In light of more recent games, though, *Yie Ar Kung Fu* is going to have to be content with a right 'onerable . . .

80%

ROBIN ■ Imagine's conversion of the hit arcade game is one of the most enjoyable beat-'em-ups. The background graphics are pretty, the animation is smooth, and *Yie Ar Kung Fu* really scores on playability, with the range of opponents offering some variety.

It's just a bit too easy – but it is a good game.

80%



INTERNATIONAL KARATE
System 3

68% Issue 24

RICKY ■ *International Karate* has just been rereleased by Prism at the budget price of £2.99. It's practically the same as *The Way Of The Exploding Fist*, but much cruder; the only significant visible difference is in the backdrops, which take you around the world in five screens.

There are also bonus screens where you can earn extra points by shattering blocks of wood.

But playability is marred by the milliard of keys your fingers have to grapple with.

The game's one redeeming feature is the excellent speech as the scores are called out. I wasn't enthralled by *International Karate* – it's not very addictive or playable.

47%

ROBIN ■ *International Karate* took a long time to actually appear after it was first announced, and I wasn't impressed when I did see it. It still seems awkward to play, and the graphics are disappointing.

50%



UCHI MATA
Martech

36% Issue 39

RICKY ■ *Uchi Mata* was the first judo simulation on the Spectrum. Traditional moves are executed in a novel way: rather than using a single keypress, the player takes the joystick through a series of actions which relate to a complete move. Four major moves are provided in the instructions, but more are there to be discovered by wiggling the joystick around.

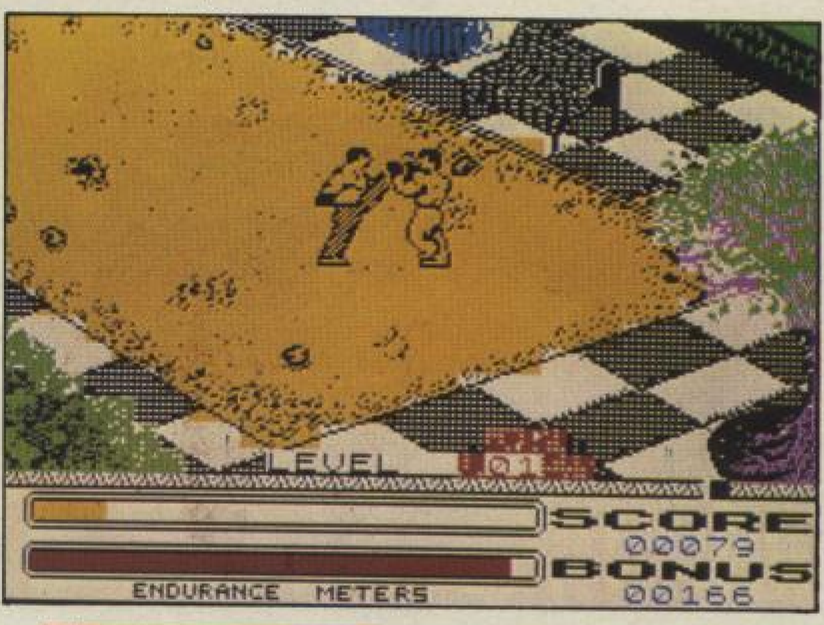
Uchi Mata sounds exciting, but the novelties soon wear off and it's not long before you wish the sweeping joystick movements could be reduced to a simple keypress. Though well-designed, the graphics flicker badly, and when the characters collide it's difficult to see what's going on.

51%

ROBIN ■ Judo is a strange martial art to simulate on a computer, because it involves a lot of contact with your opponent which others such as karate and Thai boxing don't. Martech made an admirable attempt at representing the sport in *Uchi Mata*, but the graphics are appalling and suffer from severe bouts of flicker.

What really bugs me, though, is the control method. It's one of the hardest I've ever encountered – trying to execute a move is almost a game in itself! If you like judo, stick to the real thing.

35%



KICK BOXING
Firebird

41% Issue 42

RICKY ■ Meet mean man Mick The Meat Kicker – it's a name to be reckoned with. But I don't reckon *Kick Boxing* is up to much.

The playing area is done in isometric 3-D, but this doesn't affect the gameplay, apart from making it hard to see.

You progress through the levels by killing off one opponent after another, and it's no more inspiring than it sounds.

30%

ROBIN ■ I'd forgotten just how bad this is! Firebird's representation of the fast contact sport is appalling. The characters jerk around the screen drunkenly, performing poorly-drawn moves that appear physically impossible. There are better, similar games; *Kick Boxing* is cheap, nasty and almost unplayable.

36%

LEGEND OF THE AMAZON WOMEN
US Gold

70% Issue 29

ROBIN ■ Lady Wilde and her infant daughter are the only survivors of a plane crash in the Amazon jungle. Recovering from the shock of the crash, Lady Wilde realises that her daughter has been kidnapped by the Amazons, a horde of woman warriors.

To rescue her, Lady Wilde must defeat every Amazon in her way in a battle to the death.

Legend Of The Amazon Women is little more than an average beat-'em-up; there aren't many moves, so it's quite easy to defeat your opponents. The animation is adequate, but not particularly impressive – like the game in general.

63%

RICKY ■ *Legend Of The Amazon Women* is a combat cross of Gargoyle Games's *Tir Na Nòg* and Melbourne House's *Fighting Warrior*. But it's dated and has little going for it. The animation is reasonable, but the uninteresting gameplay doesn't hold up.

51%



SAI COMBAT
Mirrorsoft

81% Issue 28

ROBIN ■ Sai karate is like karate but uses a stick called a sai. This simulation pits the player against 16 adversaries; vanquish all, and you become a Sai Master. As in most games of this genre, the screen shows two fighters trying to beat the hell out of each other.

There's a two-player option for those of you who want to hurt your friends, but this is only really playable with an Interface II unit – for the keyboard option you'd need 16 keys each!

Sai Combat is very playable, despite all those control keys; the graphics are reasonable, with smooth animation, though some of the backgrounds are a bit boring.

74%

RICKY ■ For a two-player kill-'em-up *Sai Combat* has some marvellous animation, but the gameplay becomes simple after a little practice.

72%

GLADIATOR
Domark

77% Issue 24

ROBIN ■ *Gladiator* is a bit of a departure from the standard beat-'em-up. Playing the part of a lowly slave named Marcus, you enter the combat arena in a bid to earn some money and so buy your freedom; and in case your fighting isn't too hot, there's also a gambling session.

This beat-'em-up is special because the player can choose which weapons he wants to use. The weapons have attack and defence ratings which you can find out only by trial and error.

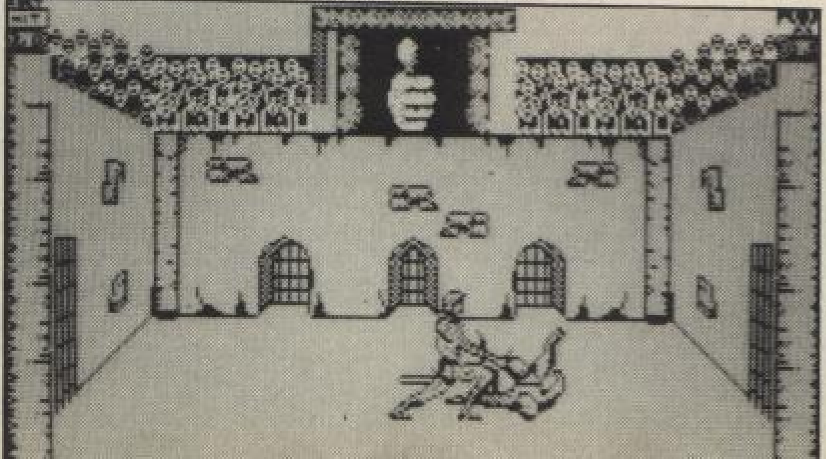
Graphically it's nothing special, the control method is tricky (there are 25 possible moves to choose from) and the imaginative gambling sequence becomes tedious.

Two years ago *Gladiator* was a good beat-'em-up variant, but now it seems only average.

52%

RICKY ■ *Gladiator* was one of the serious contenders to *The Way Of The Exploding Fist*, and it stood up well. However, it has aged and seems a bit repetitive. Still, it's certainly worth playing if you can get to grips with the awkward controls.

59%



NINJA
Mastertronic

50% Issue 37

RICKY ■ Get ready for the usual scenario which bears only some distant relationship to the backdrops and very little to the game itself . . .

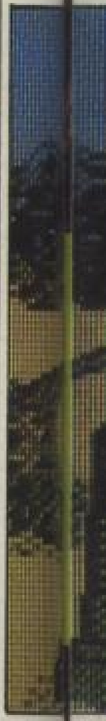
A remote relative of Ninja, our hero, has just had his temple robbed by a bunch of evil ninjas. So off trots Ninja (the good one) to kill off all the other ninjas (the bad ones), who are still lurking in the temple. These bad ninjas have beautifully Oriental names such as Thug.

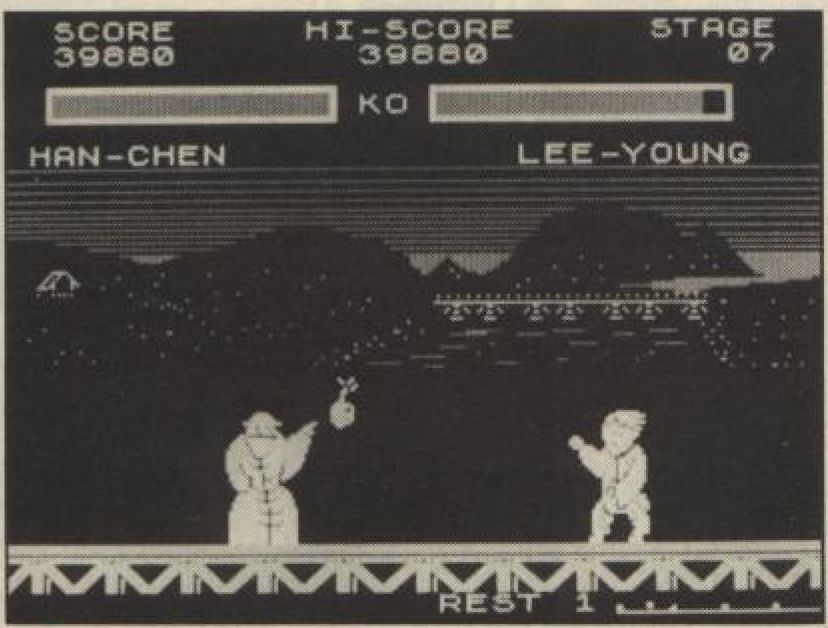
Ninja had potential, but it's amateurish and ridiculously easy. The enemies can all be killed with a couple of low kicks or by lobbing shuriken stars at them. So *Ninja* has very little to offer the dedicated combateer, despite its budget price tag.

30%

ROBIN ■ This budget beat-'em-up is one of the worst of the bunch. The graphics are very simplistic, with poor animation, and there's only the odd sound effect. It doesn't take long to get tired of *Ninja* – even though it's so cheap, steer clear of it.

39%





YIE AR KUNG FU II
Imagine

48% Issue 37

RICKY ■ When Konami attempted to improve on *Yie Ar Kung Fu* by adding a bit ovva scroll and some 'wacky' opponents, it all ended up a bit ovva mess . . .

Oolong (from the first *Yie Ar*) has a son, aptly named Lee Young, who has vowed to wipe out the last of his father's deadly enemies – Yie Gah. But Yie Gah has many faithful Oriental minions, and Lee Young has to battle his way through them to reach the master enemy.

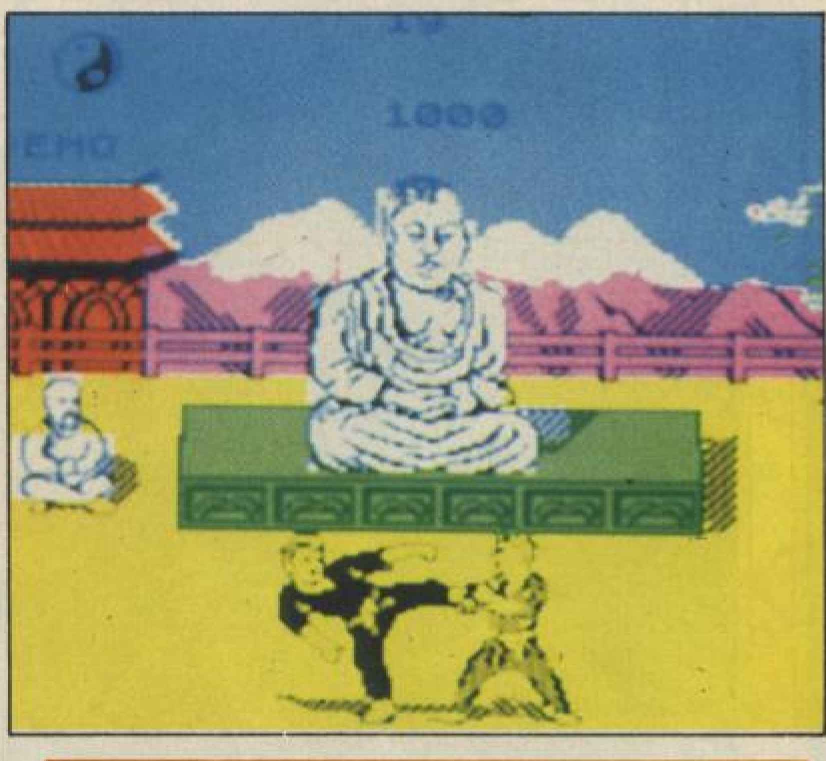
For every wave of minion attack eliminated, Lee Young gets a tea leaf, and when he has five tea leaves he can settle down and brew a cuppa to replenish his energy. There are bowls of chow mein to nibble from, too; these make Lee temporarily invincible.

The main fault of *Yie Ar Kung Fu II* is the level of difficulty – there isn't any. It's very simple, unchallenging and pretty dull.

32%

ROBIN ■ As a follow-up to a Smashed original, this is disappointing. It's not as beautifully presented or as playable as *Yie Ar Kung Fu*, and it's so easy to play. Don't bother with this mediocre effort.

42%



THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST
Melbourne House

92% Issue 21

ROBIN ■ In this, the original beat-'em-up, the player has to fight through 11 levels to reach the rank of Tenth Dan. At your disposal are a whole host of movements, which are easily used with a joystick.

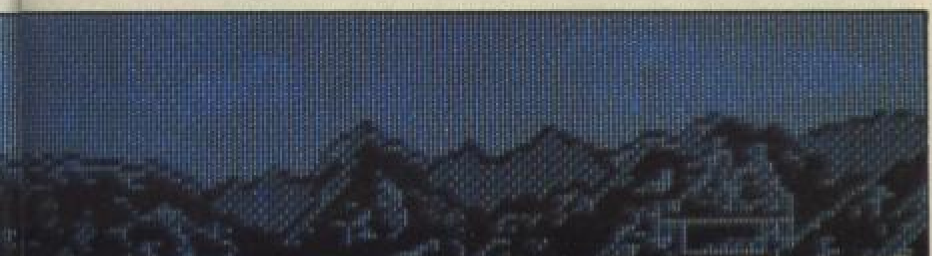
When this was released in the autumn of 1985 it was one of the most enjoyable games around, and even today I occasionally find myself returning to this golden oldie; *The Way Of The Exploding Fist* holds a special kind of magic because it was the first worthwhile game of its type.

The movement of the monochromatic characters is good, though sometimes a touch sluggish. Like many beat-'em-ups it's a bit too easy to be addictive in the long term, but the two-player option is fun, and *The Way Of The Exploding Fist* is worth looking at.

80%

RICKY ■ Despite its age, *The Way Of The Exploding Fist* has stood up very well, retaining its exciting and addictive elements. It's no wonder a game of this standard set off such a massive craze, and I'd still Smash it, so . . .

91%



THE WAY OF THE TIGER
Gremlin Graphics

93% Issue 28

ROBIN ■ This Gremlin Graphics licence is based on the Fighting Fantasy books of the same name. It's split into three distinct subgames which are loaded separately.

The first features unarmed combat, the second pole fighting and the third sword fighting.

They're highly enjoyable and very addictive – this is my favourite of the beat-'em-ups featured here. The graphics are excellent, but it's the animation that really grabs the player. It's just so smooth. If you're going to get just one beat-'em-up, I can't recommend this enough!

PICK OF THE KICKS 89%

RICKY ■ This is one of the best beat-'em-ups, with some great graphic routines. The action doesn't quite have the excitement of *Barbarian*, though.

81%



RENEGADE
Ocean

89% Issue 33

RICKY ■ Definitely the best beat-'em-up! *Renegade* is an epic of nonstop fighting with some original scenario touches.

What is the cause of all this violence, though?

It's Lucy – not just any Lucy, but your luscious Lucy, the love of your life. You're off to meet her, but on your way you run into violent street gangs intent upon mugging and killing.

There are six locations to battle through, each featuring a different set of villains – such as bikers, mad women, gangsters and evil mobs.

Renegade isn't too difficult, and it's a game you play more for high scores than for reaching the last stage. Fight, beat and enjoy till you can smell the blood.

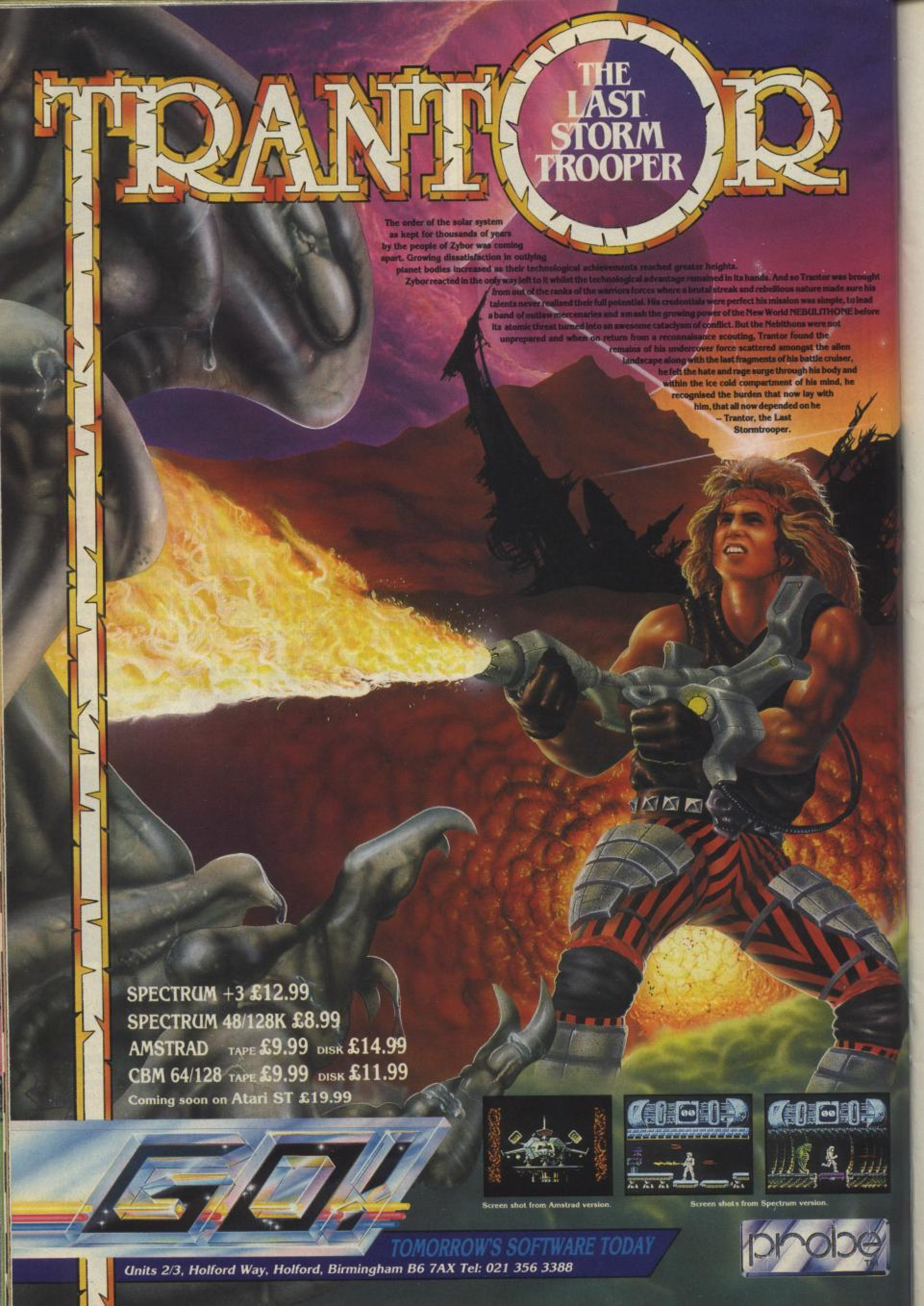
PICK OF THE KICKS 92%

ROBIN ■ I was hard put to choose between this and *The Way Of The Tiger* as my favourite beat-'em-up – *Renegade* is just so good. It's not the hardest game in the world, but it's enjoyable.

Programmer Mike Lamb managed to escape from the one-opponent-at-a-time format typical of this genre, and presents the player with up to eight baddies onscreen to be defeated.

The presentation is very slick, it would be hard to fault the graphics and sound, and with plenty of gameplay this makes an excellent buy. Try to get *Renegade* AND *The Way Of The Tiger*!

88%



TRANTOR
THE LAST STORM TROOPER
The order of the solar system as kept for thousands of years by the people of Zybor was coming apart. Growing dissatisfaction in outlying planet bodies increased as their technological achievements reached greater heights. Zybor reacted in the only way left to it whilst the technological advantage remained in its hands. And so Trantor was brought from out of the ranks of the warriors forces where a brutal streak and rebellious nature made sure his talents never realised their full potential. His credentials were perfect his mission was simple, to lead a band of outlaw mercenaries and smash the growing power of the New World NEBULITHONE before its atomic threat turned into an awesome cataclysm of conflict. But the Nebithons were not unprepared and when on return from a reconnaisance scouting, Trantor found the remains of his undercover force scattered amongst the alien landscape along with the last fragments of his battle cruiser, he felt the hate and rage surge through his body and within the ice cold compartment of his mind, he recognised the burden that now lay with him, that all now depended on he – Trantor, the Last Stormtrooper.
SPECTRUM +3 £12.99
SPECTRUM 48/128K £8.99
AMSTRAD TAPE £9.99 DISK £14.99
CBM 64/128 TAPE £9.99 DISK £11.99
Coming soon on Atari ST £19.99
Screen shot from Amstrad version.
Screen shots from Spectrum version.
GO!
TOMORROW'S SOFTWARE TODAY
Units 2/3, Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX Tel: 021 356 3388
probe

THE CRASH SAMPLER

ZX SPECTRUM

IT'S STUCK TO THE COVER – AND HERE ARE THE DETAILS!

Sorry we can't supply you with a cassette box, but it's so much easier to stick a cassette on a magazine cover than a bulky case. Still, if you cut out the cassette inlay below, you're absolutely bound to have a spare case lying around somewhere – aren't you? And now, onto the preview demo details . . .

MEANSTREAK

Mirrorsoft, Mid October
£7.95

A long way into the future the pleasure seekers of Britain are bone-idle, downright slobs. Everyone who needs to get anywhere travels by molecular disassembly/assembly – so much safer than using the only existing road – the London Orbital, the M25. Known as 'The Battletrack', it's a place where a rebel minority armed with lethal bikes race up the streets killing each other. You wanna see the action? It's mean, it's vicious, and watch out for low bridges when you type **LOAD""** and sit back to enjoy Mirrorsoft's demo, which is also reviewed in this issue.



DRILLER

Incentive, End October
£14.95

You've seen the Freescape screen shots previewed – now see it in action as Incentive's *Driller* demo takes you through some puzzles from section one. *Driller* will have two objectives within the game, the primary task being to drill holes into the moon's surface to allow dangerous gas to escape, and second to deactivate automatic defence systems which are causing a problem. There's on-screen text (press any key to move from screen to screen) describing the game, and it's **LOAD""** to see *Driller* in ravishing 3-D.



BASIL THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE

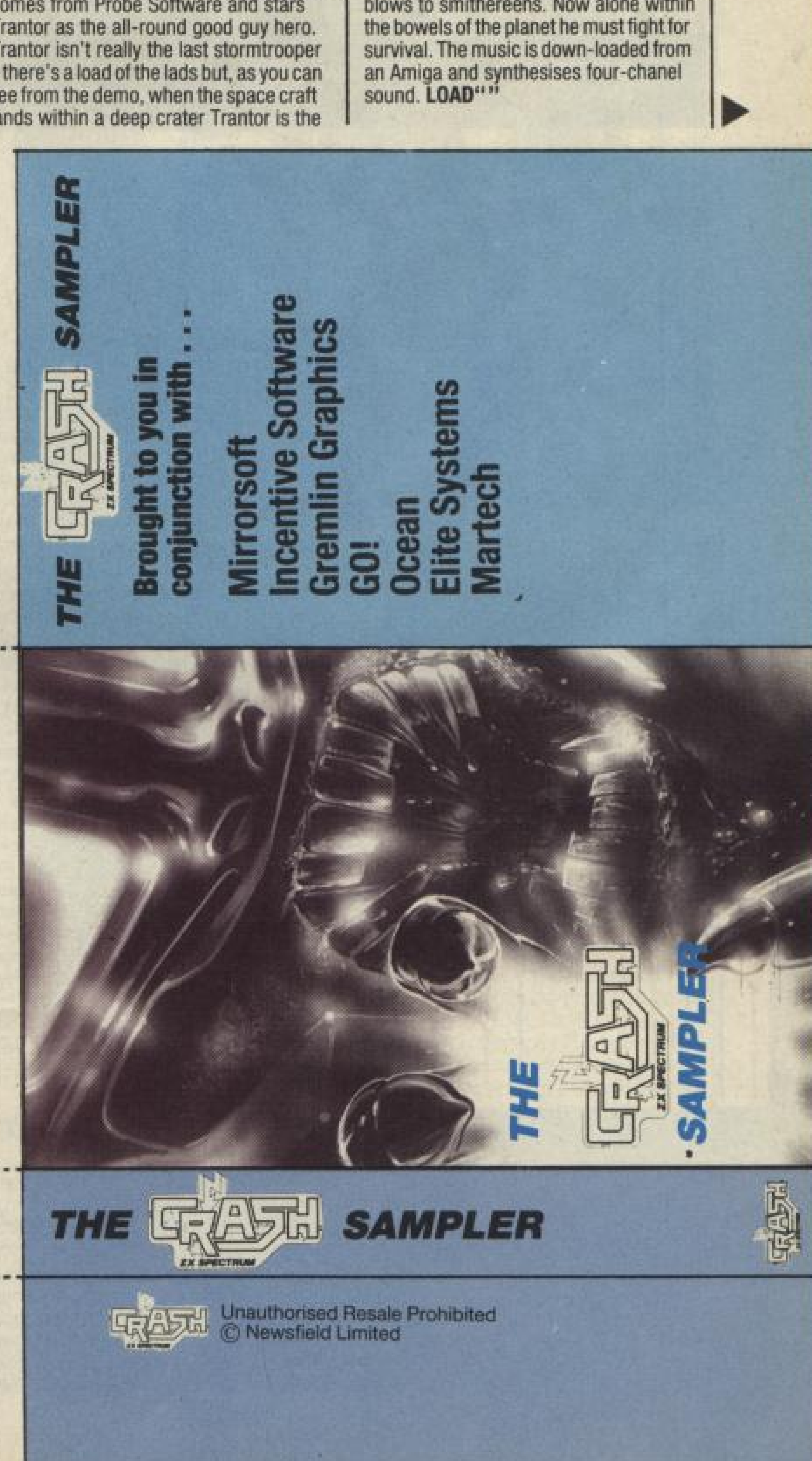
Gremlin Graphics, October
£7.95

Squeaky clean arcade adventure antics in Gremlin's Walt Disney licence. This demo offers 15 playable screens to tickle your appropriate fancies. Bound and leap about to discover five clues which should help solve the mystery of what really happened to Doctor Dawson. Keys are **Z/X** left/right, **K/M** up/down, **ENTER** to leap and **SPACE** to pick up or examine. Elementary clue hunting begins with **LOAD""**

TRANTOR THE LAST STORMTROOPER

GO!, October
£7.95

The first game from US Gold's new label comes from Probe Software and stars Trantor as the all-round good guy hero. Trantor isn't really the last stormtrooper – there's a load of the lads but, as you can see from the demo, when the space craft lands within a deep crater Trantor is the only one to escape alive before the craft blows to smithereens. Now alone within the bowels of the planet he must fight for survival. The music is down-loaded from an Amiga and synthesises four-chanel sound. **LOAD""**

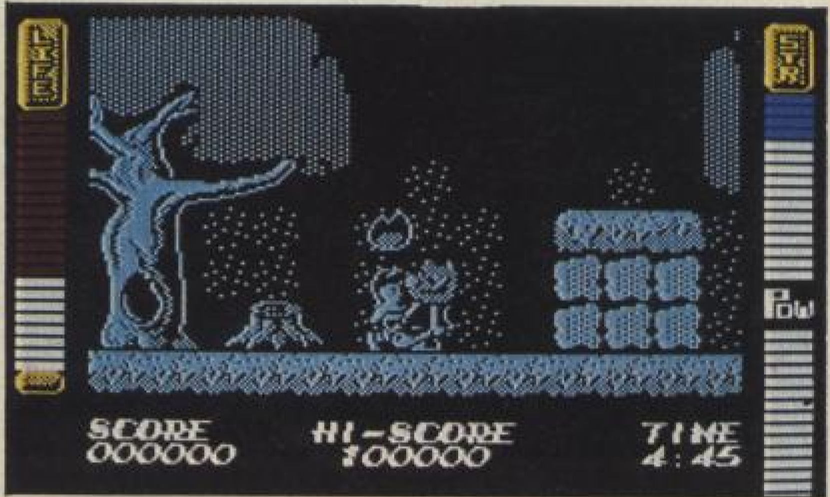


ATHENA

Ocean, End September
£7.95

We were hoping to have *Gryzor* as well, but development of the program continues even now. The review of *Athena* is in this issue, but here's a chance to try out the game yourself in this playable demo of the first level. Keys are redefinable, and there's a choice of joysticks. Athena is a formidable woman, belting her way through life collecting weapons and powers hidden behind the rock formations. Kill the ogres and other assorted nasties. Time is constantly ticking down as the damage level increases. Be on your guard.

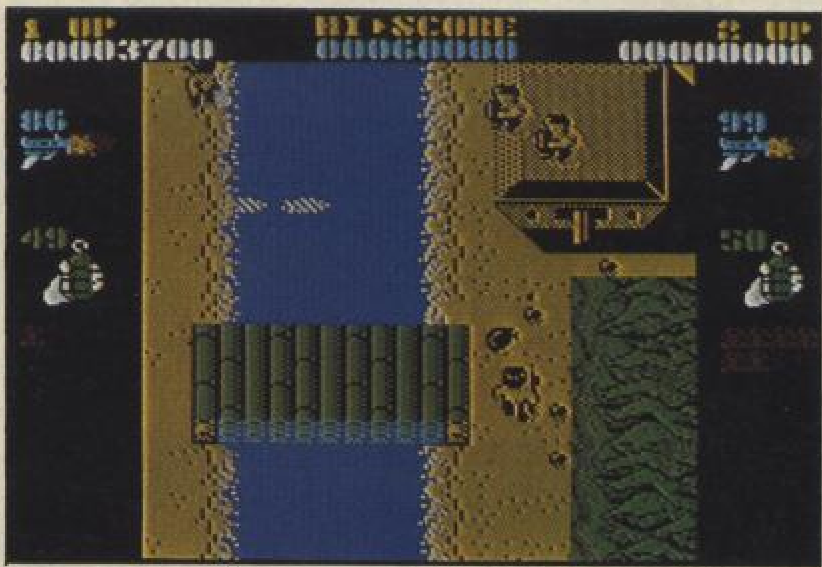
LOAD"" to load the master program, then STOP THE TAPE, select the desired keys or choose a joystick and then load in the playable first level. If you finish the level – don't attempt to load in another level even if the computer prompts you to – it simply isn't there!



IKARI WARRIORS

Elite, Christmas
£7.95

Jungle life in Elite's long awaited arcade conversion. The two-player game, although you *can* go it alone, takes our hero through the jungle and swamp section of the game. Full on-screen instructions inform you about the control system – but once chosen it isn't possible to select again. The full task will be to struggle through several levels to rescue General Alexander Cook – however, you can't accomplish that in our demo, it's just a good old fashioned shoot-'em-up. **LOAD""**



SLAINE THE KING

Martech, October
£7.95

A demo of Martech's latest *2000 AD* licence with that weird control method. Gasp as you see Sláine's thoughts waft through his mind on the left of the screen! Thrill to the comic-strip pictures as you see Sláine maim, kill and maim some more! And perspire to the pre-release hype on the top right. All this and more when you **LOAD""**



SIDE A

MEAN STREAK
Mirrorsoft

DRILLER
Incentive

BASIL THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE
Gremlin

TRANTOR – THE LAST STORMTROOPER
US Gold

Use the table provided to note the tape counter position of each demo

SIDE B

ATHENA
Imagine

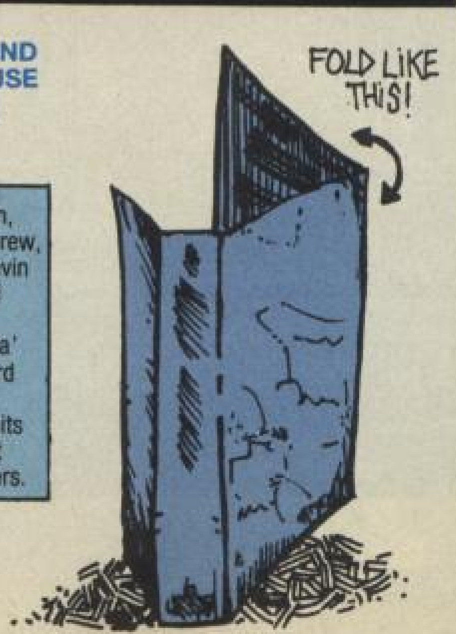
IKARI WARRIORS
Elite

SLAINE THE KING
Martech

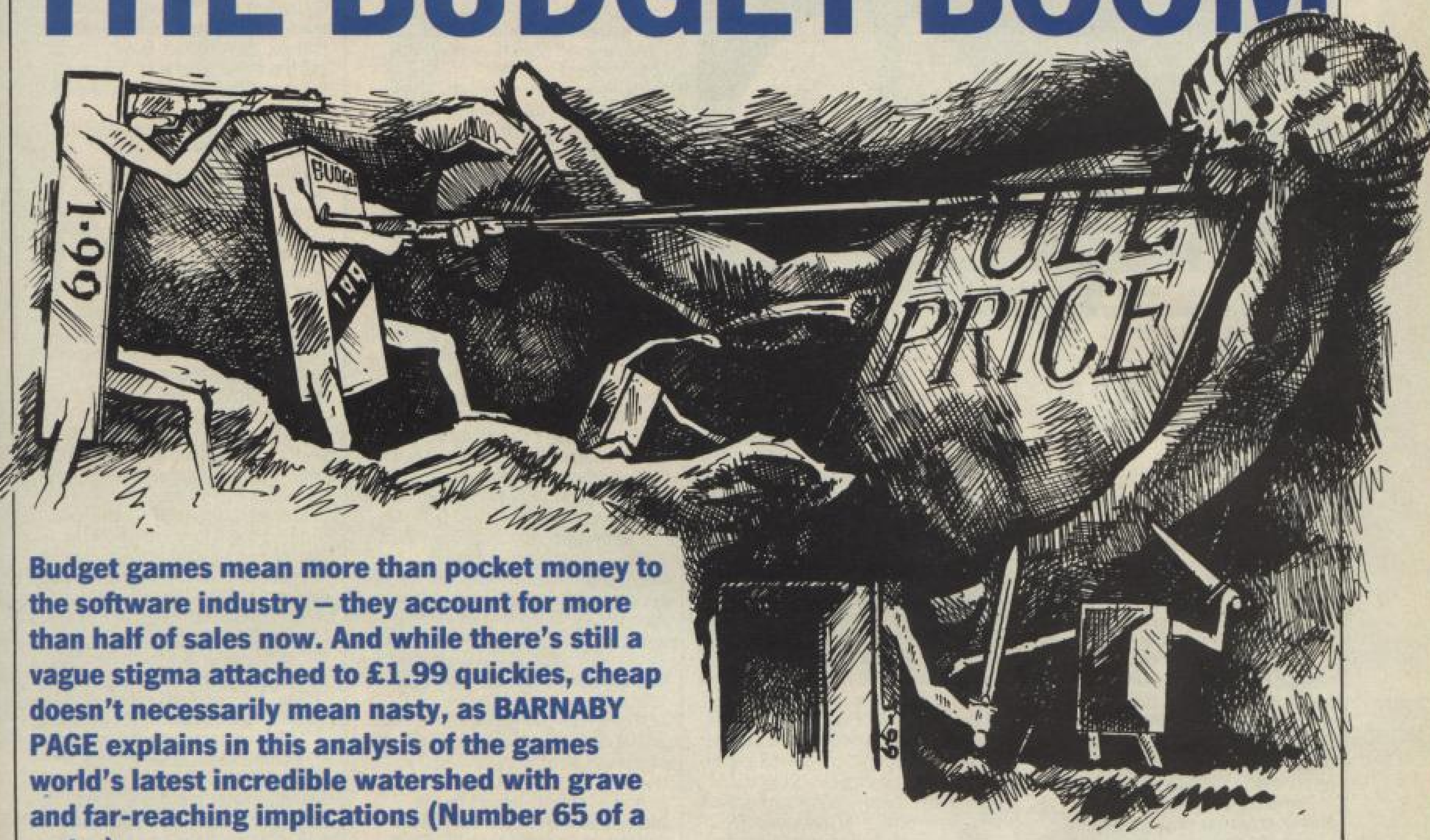
FILE NAME	COUNTER
MEANSTREAK	
DRILLER	
BASIL GRT MOUSE DETECTIVE	
TRANTOR LAST STORMTROOPER	
ATHENA	
IKARI WARRIORS	
SLAINE THE KING	

JUST CUT OUT THE INLAY AND FOLD WHERE INDICATED–USE ANY SPARE CASSETTE BOX YOU HAVE.

SPECIAL THANKS GO TO: Pat Bitton, John Cook, Dalali Software, Ian Andrew, Major Developments, Sue Quinn, Kevin and all at Gremlin Graphics, Richard Tidsall, Fergus McGovern, Probe Software, Gary Bracey, Andy 'Athena' Deakin, David Aubrey-Jones, Bernard Dugdale and the Elite crew, Data Duplication for doing the technical bits involving cassettes and the ladies at Carlisle who stuck them on the covers.



THE BUDGET BOOM



Budget games mean more than pocket money to the software industry – they account for more than half of sales now. And while there's still a vague stigma attached to £1.99 quickies, cheap doesn't necessarily mean nasty, as BARNABY PAGE explains in this analysis of the games world's latest incredible watershed with grave and far-reaching implications (Number 65 of a series).

THERE'S nothing like a good apocalypse to get this nervous industry excited. Every year, the pundits say the bubble is about to burst. Amstrad gobbles up Sinclair – whatever happened to gentility? CSD collapses – is this the end of distribution as we know it? American giant Electronic Arts muscles into the UK market – was the battle lost on the playing fields of Pasadena?

But perhaps the biggest bugbear this autumn is the boom in sales of budget software. When Mastertronic first launched £1.99 games three-and-a-half years ago, the flourishing industry laughed at them. Fact: Mastertronic has sold about 12 million games in under four years.

Now Mastertronic General Manager Martin Carroll claims his software house's many labels (M.A.D., Americana, Entertainment USA, Bulldog and the rerelease label Ricochet, all budget) account for about 15% of all sales in the UK leisure software market.

And the Gallup market-research organisation reckons some 60% of all games sold this year will be budget – an estimate pushed up from less than 50% in the light of soaring sales. So far from being a pesky thorn in the side of full-price sales, budget is big business; some normally sober observers reckon the UK leisure software market is worth as much as £80 million a year.

Already, the figures tell a story: Mastertronic's Carroll will put out 10,000 or 15,000 copies of a game at once, while the first production run for a full-price product might be just 2,000 or 3,000 copies.

But reports of the death of full-price software have been greatly exaggerated, most industry bosses agree – because though budget and full-price are both battling for the consumer's money, they're fighting by different rules.

Full-price games sell quickly when they're hot and new, propelled up the charts by magazine reviews, ad campaigns and word of mouth – or they flop. As Code Masters Manager Jim Darling puts it, 'for a full-price game to succeed now there has to be something pretty special about it – and that's more to do with the licensed names and the hype than the actual product'.

Budget games are low-profile, unadvertised ('there's just not enough money to do it' – Darling), and there's not much profit on each unit. But they keep on going, casually bought like magazines in corner newsagents and garages, which the full-price games don't reach. 'A good budget game will sell for one or two or three years,' enthuses Darling, and as an example-in-the-making he cites Code Masters's *BMX Simulator*, released in the New Year, it 'hasn't dropped off at all'.



► **Mastertronic launching another 212 labels in its bid to stay on top of the budget heap . . .**

NICE LITTLE EARNERS

Though the profit margin on budget games is tiny, overheads are low – cheap packaging and duplication, often minor bargain-basement programmers – and budget labels produce far more games each month than their full-price counterparts. 'The key to success in budget publication is low overhead and high production run,' says Mastertronic's Carroll with authority.

Some critics see the budget labels churning out cassetteفuls of dross, scraping a few pennies and letting the pounds pile up any old how. But budget producers insist that they can't afford to release poor games – because the individual titles aren't well-known, it's the name of the label that makes or breaks sales. Indeed, even within the industry, it's the *range* – Reaktör, Americana, The Power House whatever – rather than the actual game which is promoted.

Darling of Code Masters takes an understandably optimistic view: 'The real reason for our success is quality of product. With one or two exceptions, we've not released any duff products.'

And he's dubious about the value of full-price hype, saying 'the manufacturing and distribution end of this industry underestimates the ability of the end users to know what they're buying and make an intelligent purchase.'

Darling also gives credit to his archrival, acknowledging that 'what Mastertronic proves is that for £1.99 or £2.99 the kids can get games as good as they used to pay £8.99 for.'

One dissenting voice: Electronic Arts supremo Trip Hawkins. 'If you buy a book, you expect it to be well-edited, well-printed and there to be no typographical errors,' he pontificated in a recently-published interview. 'If you buy a record you expect all the instruments to be finely-tuned . . . with budget software, a lot of the production values aren't very good.'

Strangely, though, rerelease budget labels like Elite's £2.99 Classics haven't sold very well – even when the games were Smashes available at a fraction of their original price. It's those crazy, crazy markets. ▶



► **'Why pay more?': advertising spends are low for budget houses, so Code Masters is experimenting with holding up signs in fields – the 'grass-roots marketing' technique**

AN UNEXPLORED BIT IN THE MIDDLE

There's another side to the story, though. About half of all budget games are sold through small outlets such as garages and CTNs (confectioner/ tobacconist/ newsagents), but the rest go through specialist software shops and the high-street multiples, where they positively profit from the presence of hyped-up full-price packages.

The goggle-eyed sprogs of industry myth wander along the software racks and pick up an £8.99 game – and when you're blowing a £10 note anyway, you don't miss another couple of quid, so the consumer picks up a budget game on his way to the till.

Perhaps the psychological appeal of *buying, obtaining*, means that budget games will never quite supplant the higher-priced products and their fancy packaging. And, to be fair to the full-price games, it's not just a matter of glitter; some of the best software will always be full-price because budget producers can't afford to spend a long time programming or to pay the teams of specialists for sound, graphics and so on which big games require.

Maybe that's why b***** is still a dirtyish word. Take the Playability By Design team (*U.C.M. – The Ultimate Combat Mission*): they don't do budget games, oh no, they do 'low-price full-price games' which Mastertronic happen to sell at £2.99, according to programmer Dave Thompson.

It's not so easy to really make budget games in the full-price style, though. Production methods are different for budget houses, and so is distribution to those all-important CTNs. Budget games have to get everywhere because they're not hunted for as specific titles; 'sales and distribution are extremely important because they're *radically* different,' according to Firebird Publisher Chris Smith.

Budget packaging serves a different purpose, too. Whereas full-price packaging can be glossy and impressive, the inlay for a budget game has to tell you something about the unpromoted title itself.

That's another reason why 'it'd be very difficult for a full-price house to go into budget', as Smith comments.

It's more likely that the full-price labels will lower their prices to a midrange compromise – £5.95, say, as Software Projects did earlier this year – and indeed some wild estimates put the 'average' price of 8-bit software as low as £7.95 already.

'It's going to get harder to maintain a full release schedule on 8-bit at full price,' says Firebird's Smith. 'As 16-bit hardware gets cheaper the 16-bit machines will be the 'quality' end and the 8-bit mostly budget except for a few special projects.'

Mastertronic's Carroll agrees – 'budget may well take over for existing 8-bit machines,' he says, because 'the quality difference between budget and full-price has narrowed'.

A firmer forecast comes from Martin Currey, Sales Manager at R&R Distribution (which handles the Top Ten budget label among others, and owns Alternative): 'Full-price software is going to drop a couple of quid. There will be a situation where it'll remain a steady balance; I don't think budget will take over.

'There'll be two distinct price levels after this Christmas: £6.95, £7.95 at maximum, and then your £15/£20 level.'

And, of course, there'll be the budgets selling away, mostly at the variants of £2 and £3 (£1.99, £2.95 etc).

END OF WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

So budget *has* boomed, and software houses like Mastertronic have proved that you can produce quality games, sell them at a quarter of 'full price' (whatever that is) and still make a tidy profit.

The retail trade is convinced, too – when Woolworth decided to reintroduce software to its shops in autumn 1986, the cautious chain tested the water with budget games in 70 shops and *then*, when that was successful, realised computer games do sell and risked full-price software as well.

One producer, Ocean's David Ward, dreads budget taking over the high-street multiples. When deciding what to stock, many chains assess sales value per foot of shelf – and of course a few feet of budget games drags down the value per foot of the whole software section. Despite the Woolworth move, Ward fears budget may force *all* games out of the high streets.

Still, many full-price houses have decided that if they can't beat the budget specialists they might as well join 'em, and launched budget labels: witness Hewson's Rack-It, with its first releases this month (see page 27 of this CRASH), distributed by market leader Mastertronic. Only a few have shied away from the budget battleground: Ocean, Activision and Elite (burned by its Classics experience), for instance.

As the characteristically self-confident industry paper *Computer Trade Weekly* proclaims, 'budget has won the intellectual battle; it appears to be winning the commercial one as well'. That's software for you; another day, another crisis . . .

MY POLL IS BIGGER THAN YOURS

THERE ARE LIES, damned lies, and sales figures. Everyone accepts that Mastertronic sells more 'units' than any other budget house, but there's a constant barrage of statistics as the also-rans fight for second and third place. ('Units'? A separate game and a compilation each count as one unit. Market share is usually measured in units sold, not income.)

Telecomsoft – that's Firebird – claims 11.6% of the whole games market and therefore, by Publisher Chris Smith's reckoning, about a quarter of budget sales. He'll settle for second place after Mastertronic, but insists 'we're closing the gap rapidly'.

That's news to Jim Darling at Code Masters, who says 'we probably sell more than Telecomsoft'. Statistics from the Gallup software sales charts give Code Masters only about 15% of the budget market – but, according to Darling, that's because Gallup doesn't poll enough of the CTNs where Code Masters sell.

Nonsense, says Alternative's Martin Currey, worn out and tetchy after a hard day of thinking he sells more than Code Masters.

Even Mastertronic General Manager Martin Carroll quibbles: 'The Gallup poll consistently underestimates our market share because of the preponderance of W H Smith in the chart sales.' He reckons Mastertronic takes 30% of the budget market.

Ears must be burning in Gallup's north London number-crunching headquarters. Social Surveys (Gallup), perhaps the country's best-known pollsters, compiles the weekly music, video and software charts as well as political surveys, opinion polls and market research.

The Gallup software chart originally listed each week's 30 top-selling games. It was changed in mid-July to the Top Fifty Computer Games – but it's actually two charts of 25 titles, one covering full-price games and one covering budget games. They're considered different products – perhaps because they do reach different markets and sell for different reasons.

Every week, Gallup sends a list of games to about 150 shops around the country. The shops fill in how many copies they've sold of each title, and Gallup compiles the results, publishing them each week in *Computer Trade Weekly*.

The charts annoy some software producers because they don't reflect CTN sales as well as they do high-street chains and computer stores; and, as R&R Distribution/Alternative's Currey points out, a slow-selling budget game may not show up in the charts because shop assistants 'forget to put things down which did sell but only sell one or two'.

Still, 'Gallup's all right as long as you don't trust it 100%,' he says. There's not much choice – retailers depend on the charts. Says Woolworth buyer Nigel Wood, who chooses software for the whole chain: 'We're going in a very clear direction – the Top Fifty'.

And Wood reckons those top 50 account for 65% of games sold each week. They may not be perfect, but you can't ignore the charts.





ACE 2
PILOT ONE
PLANES 03
SCORE
0000000
TAKE OFF
ARM AIRCRAFT
ACE 2
AIRCRAFT WEAPONS SELECTION
PILOT TWO
PLANES 03
SCORE
0000000
6×HEAT AIR-AIR
4×RADAR AIR-AIR
0×AIR-SHIP
PREPARE FOR TAKE OFF
High speed one or two pilot action.
Computer opponent has advanced artificial intelligence at 20 skill levels.
Comprehensive options.
PILOT ONE
PLANES 03
SCORE
0000000
ACE 2
PILOT TWO
PLANES 03
SCORE
0000000
Air-air and air-ground combat.
Real time, real space action.
Equipped with two aircraft types and a variety of modern missiles.
Commodore 64 Disk £14.95
Commodore 64 Cass. £9.95
Spectrum 48 Cass. £8.95
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IBM PC £19.95
Atari ST £19.95
(IBM and Atari for Christmas)
CASCADE
GAMES · LTD
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24 hr telphone ordering 0423 504663 Telex: 265871 MONREF G Quoting 72:MAG 11320
ACE 2
THE ULTIMATE HEAD TO HEAD CONFLICT

IT'S HERE, IT COULD BE

The CRASH warriors have earned their stripes – but come December it will be time to test YOUR skill in a fight for survival when Imagine unveils *Combat School*. We spill the bacon 'n' beans . . .

KONAMI is back with Imagine for a special licensing deal – *Combat School*, an arcade game guaranteed to wreck many a joystick when launched this Christmas. The arcade machine has been around for several months, eaten bankfuls of coins and strained a few wrists in its short lifetime.

Combat School is exactly what it sounds like – an American army training camp where unless you're made of steel, you've no hope of making it through the seven levels to qualify for *The Mission*, an extra game at the end.

It's like a combat version of *Track 'n' Field* – the faster you can wiggle the joystick (or trackball for the arcade machine) the more speed/power you build up to race through the events. It's for two players, or one with a computer opponent – both playing simultaneously, with a split display on some screens.

The Spectrum version is written by Andy Deakin, who brought us *Labyrinthion* and *Mega Bucks*; it's his second game for Imagine. (Andy's first was *Athena*, on this month's CRASH Sampler.)

Combat School will be a 48K multiload in order to squeeze in all the levels, but 128K should manage it all in one huge load. And it just has to be that way – Imagine defies anyone to squeeze this little lot into 48K . . .

test one
THE ASSAULT COURSE

Hup an' over in the first event against the clock. There are loads of hazards, such as walls and monkey bars – and all the time you've got to waggle like mad to keep up speed and leap to the top.

test two
SHOOTING RANGE I

Kambooom! Shoot the targets as they pop up from the ground – be quick or they disappear again as fast as lightning. To qualify you must hit 40 targets.

test three
IRON MAN

Tough enough to take part in the Iron Man cross-country race, huh? Scrambling over rough terrain, you splash into the roaring, white water of the rapids, into canoes and through the rocks . . . all in record time.

test four
SHOOTING RANGE II

More kaabooooms and noisy stuff, but this time with moving jet cars which speed across the landscape faster than you can say 'another 40 hits to qualify'.

test five
ARM WRESTLING

This trial of strength features in so many films – but Paul Newman and Steve McQueen had it easy. See how tough it is wrestling a joystick! The more wiggles per second the more power you get.

test six
SHOOTING RANGE III

And yet more kabooooms! This is similar to the first shooting test in *Combat School*, except you mustn't hit the targets displaying a picture of your Instructor – no matter how much you'd like to blow his brains out by this stage.

test seven
INSTRUCTOR FIGHT

A real fight to the death – or at least to the knockout, against the Instructor who's taken you so lovingly, so caringly through this course of training. Beat him and you're ready for . . .

THE MISSION

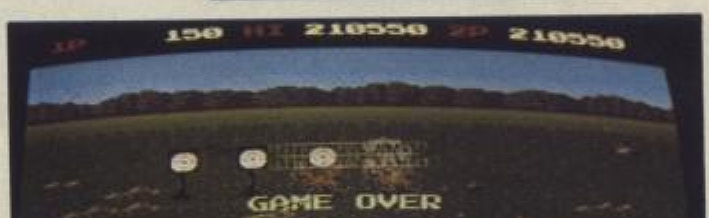
This is the big one, the one you've gone through gruelling training for. An embassy siege is taking place and you've been selected to battle your way through a horizontally-scrolling landscape to free the hostage. The world relies on you!

penalty test
CHIN UPS

If you don't reach the qualifying score in a *Combat School* event, the Chin Ups screen appears – complete enough chin-ups within the time limit and you can carry on. If you fail, the Instructor bellows 'go home to your mothers' – that's the type of guy he is.



A screen from the Spectrum version of *Combat School*



Lots of kabooms, tough guys and strained wrists from the coin-op that's been coining it in, Konami's *Combat School*



OURS, IT'S IMAGINE'S . . .

COMBAT SCHOOL







WIN A SPECIALLY-DESIGNED IMAGINE *COMBAT SCHOOL* ARCADE GAME

Crash Competition

Who else but I, Joe Comps Minion, could receive so much joy from giving away an arcade game? Yes, an arcade game in your own home!

BUT WAIT – this is no ordinary, overdecorated arcade cabinet; Ocean and Imagine began developing arcade games in suitcases so their distant programmers could play the originals for the purposes of programming. After all, who wants to lug damned great cabinets around the country?

So for the first prize in this special competition the winner will receive a complete, handmade, custom-designed and reasonably portable (see panel) Konami *Combat School* arcade game, complete with a Tatung Einstein monitor. It's worth around £1,000.

(If you're reading this at The *PCW* Show, you can pop down to the Ocean stand and take a look at the arcade game yourself.)

To get your hands on this amazing prize, correctly answer the five Imagine questions below. Three overall winners will be picked and then whisked by Imagine (travel expenses paid) to their hide-out in gloriously sunny Manchester, there to take part in a *Combat School* play-off.

Only one clear winner will emerge complete with the Konami arcade package. But the two unlucky runners-up won't really be that unlucky – they'll receive Imagine goodie bags stuffed with T-shirts, mugs, games and other bits and pieces.

20 further runners-up will get copies of the Spectrum *Combat School* when it's launched at Christmastime. And so, your starter for ten is . . .

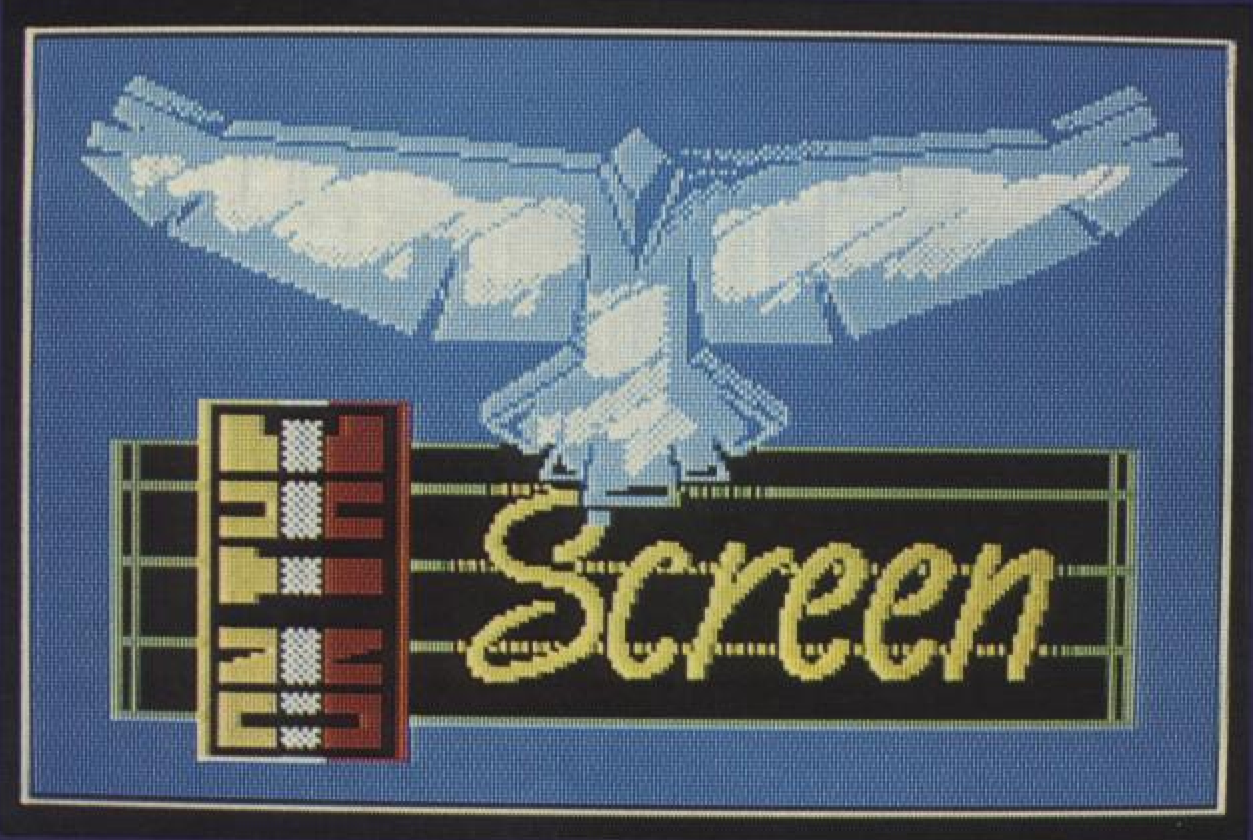
1 Which game launched the new Imagine label in early 1985?
2 Who was the author of Imagine's private-investigator game *Movie*?
3 Who was the hero in Imagine's Smashed *Yie Ar Kung Fu*?
4 Which company produced the original *Green Beret* coin-op on which Imagine based its game?
5 How many events are there in Imagine's *Hypersports*?

Answers, please, on a postcard (or the back of a sealed envelope) to **COMBAT SCHOOL COMP, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB***. Don't forget your name and address – and a telephone number would be handy. All entries must be in by October 25.

IMAGINE'S *COMBAT SCHOOL* ARCADE GAME

Normally the Ocean/Imagine custom-built arcade games fit in a very portable, metal camera case with a joystick socket and fire buttons. However, as *Combat School* requires a built-in trackball, the designers don't know yet how big the case will be – hence the phrase 'reasonably portable'! But I'm assured it won't be bigger than a medium-sized TV cabinet . . .

HE SQUEAKS, C



THE WINNER

I was surprised by the number of new logos received for the competition (most done with on of Rainbird's *Art Studios*), and the standard was far higher than I expected. Still, that shows how much I underestimate you.

There were a few problems. A lot of the screens were too colourful, and too many of the pictures were devoted to overused, unoriginal ideas. Things like artistic utensils – pens, pencils etc – got a bit monotonous after a couple of million screens. Still, it's over now; congratulations and commiserations to all those who want them.

And Simon McCaroll of Wirral in Merseyside wins the ultimate accolade: his colourful, bright, and attractive On The Screen logo wins him a copy of Rainbird's *Advanced OCP Art Studio*. His Rainbird is a particularly neat and uncommon feature. So this is the one that's going to be on top of me for the foreseeable future . . .

MIKE 'THE MOUSE' DUNN, star of stage and screen dump, gazes into the enigmatic Speccy – at winning entries for the Issue 43 On The Screen logo comp sponsored by Rainbird (on this page), AND the usual gallery of your screens (opposite)



SECOND PLACE

I couldn't resist this one – it had to win something. The Jetman character brings out the best in this screen from Paul Dilks of Beeston, Nottinghamshire.

THIRD PLACE

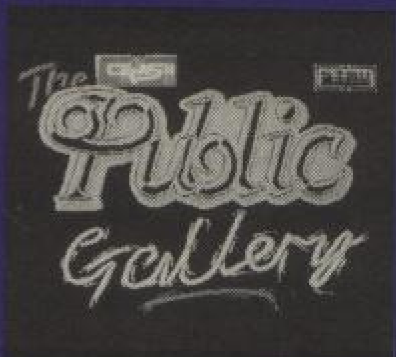
Andrew Swan's chunky Spectrum and test-card background draw attention to his cute logo. Andrew hails from St Andrews in Fife, Scotland.

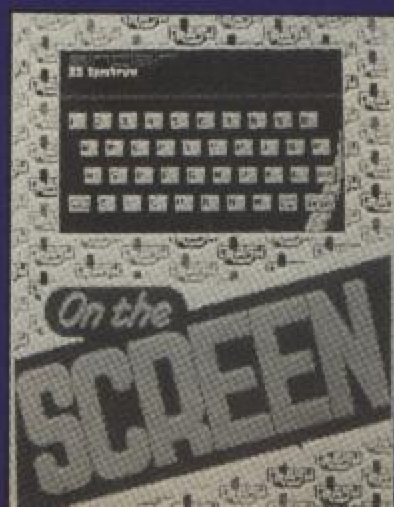


RUNNERS-UP

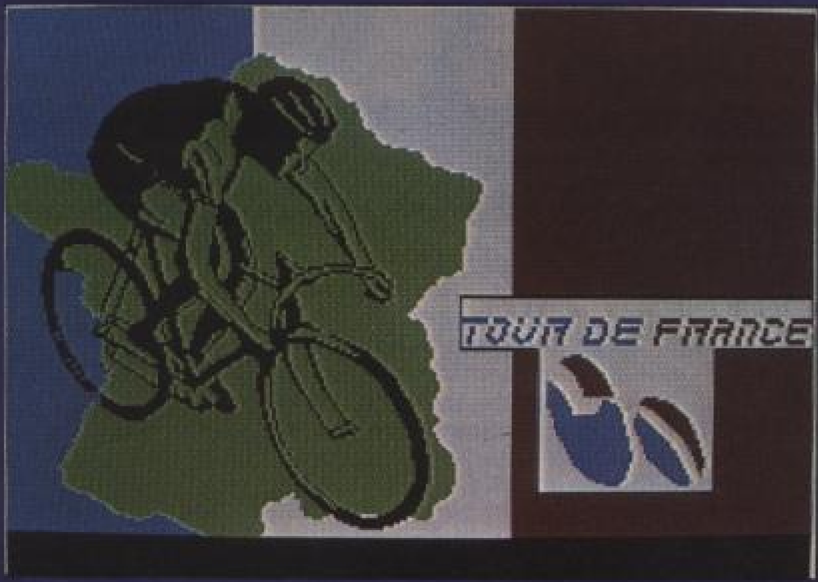
Unfortunately Roger 'I hate pictures' Kean wouldn't give me much space to print the other runners-up . . . still, in fourth place comes Matthew Arnold of Newport Pagnell of Buckinghamshire, who must have drawn this picture of a Spectrum with his monitor on its side!

And the fifth winner is Mr P Stavers of Ashbrooks in Sunderland, whose entry was notable for its effective lettering.



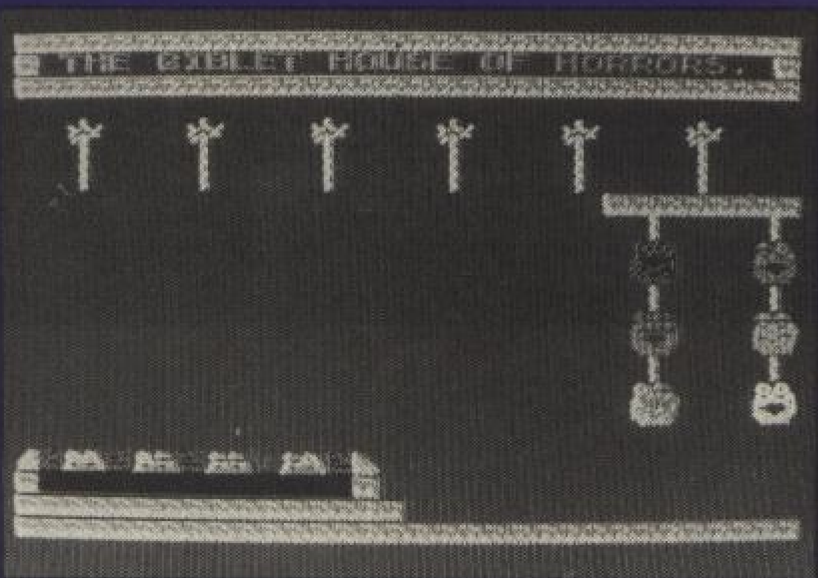


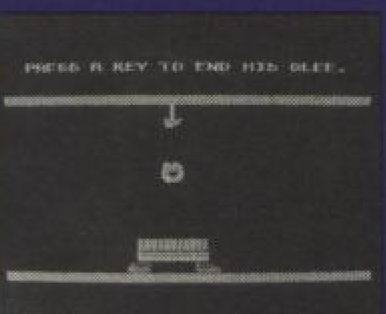
OTHERS LISTEN



TOUR DE FRANCE

Francis Lee from Handsworth in Birmingham sent in a very good tape with some neat screens. The first one, *Tour De France*, uses lots of colour, and has been well drawn; the cyclist fills up the foreground and the French flag in the background gives it that extra bit of style!







GIBLET

Daftness award of the month has to go to the duo who call themselves Simac; their demo program is completely mad, and brilliantly funny. Called *Giblet* (perhaps after the animation team who did the videos for Jackie Wilson's *Reet Petite* and Westworld's *Sonic Boom Boy*, among other things), their demo features a little green creature – Giblet .

It seems Giblet has annoyed you with some trivial prank; now the poor beastie (boy) finds himself strung above any suitably evil punishment you choose. The terrors range from a bed of six-inch nails to a hundred-mile drop. Fun for all the family . . . sort of . . .

LUNA JETMAN

I goin' prin' this! You just can't get away from him, can you? A big, fat, cowardly yellow loony superhero floats loonily past a space mine . . . Mark Otway of Shepperton in Middlesex is responsible for this unparalleled looniness.



DIVA

Another Francis Lee piece, *Diva* is based on the film of the same name about which I know absolutely nothing but which film buffs Kean and Page assure me is a very chic movie set in Paris which was all about an opera singer whose name they can't remember and it has a very good motorbike chase and came out in about 1983. So there . . .



Phew – finished for another month. It's Saturday morning, the streets are filled with tourists, the birds are singing in the trees, and I've just got my O level results.

I may be overqualified for CRASH now – but if you've got any good screens still send them to Mike Dunn, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB* – remember, if your entry is printed you get a full-colour framed'n'mounted screen dump courtesy of Rainbird. (And if you want your tape back, send a stamped self-addressed envelope with it.)


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BREAKING IN

Homegrown software stops here; professional programming starts. It's not easy to make that quantum leap, however great your games are, because the business is a jungle – but, as programmer DAVID LESTER explains, all you need is luck, a head on your shoulders and a good pair of shoes (for trudging the streets).

LEAF THROUGH the computer press, and you'll find a different kind of ad, not promoting a game or a discount shop but *looking for* games, or other programs, or programmers. The software houses do want to see your games if they're any good – but today's market is very sophisticated, so it's important to prepare very carefully before you send in your work.

The place to begin is the program itself. Before contemplating publishing it, you need to be sure that it's the right sort of thing. It needn't necessarily be in machine code – for some applications, other languages are sufficient. But for most programs speed is important, so you should either use machine code or a compiled language which can be translated easily into machine code. For arcade games, in particular, it's unlikely that you'll achieve the needed speed and quality of graphics without machine code.

But this should not put you off if you can't program in assembler or a compilable language. There are several very good programs on sale which will do the programming bits of designing a game for you – mainly for adventures. Such utilities began with Melbourne House's *H.U.R.G.* in the distant past of 1984, but now there's also Gilsoft's *PAW* (*The Professional Adventure Writer*).

When you've written your game, you should then try to view it in a different way: as if you were buying it, not selling it. If you can, ask a friend to give his/her opinion about it – not just saying how good it is, but how it could be improved. It should be fairly easy to start, so that people can enjoy it from day one – but very difficult to beat, and ideally getting harder as the player gets further into it.

PROFESSIONAL TOUCHES

There are lots of professional touches which can turn a good amateur game into an excellent commercial-standard one. Go through all the screen displays, and tidy them up till they look right – easy to read, pleasant to look at, showing the right information in a graphically-exciting way. It's surprising just what a difference simple things can make: redefining the character set, for instance, or putting in skill levels so that beginners can enjoy it as much as hardened addicts.

Sound effects are important, too.

First impressions are crucial – if the first few screens are bad, then you're unlikely to find a firm to take it. A well-designed loading screen can help, but more important than this is the title screen. This should be interesting, moving in parts if at all possible. Credits can be fun, or you can use several screens.

'We're looking for three basic characteristics,' says Ocean Software Manager Gary Bracey: 'originality, graphics (though these can be slightly altered if necessary) and most of all playability, which every game must have.'

Look at games already on the market













for other ideas – but preferably adapt others, not simply copying them, which might breach their copyright.

NO RIGHT TO COPY

Copyright is important – it's protecting your rights. You might have written the next *Elite*, but if a software house you send it to claims it's written by them, not you, how can you prove it?

If you can, protect the game from people breaking into it; then, in the code, include several copyright signs, with your name and the date you put them in. You should also display this clearly on the screen – either the title screen, or even the normal game screen displays.

Then, to prove that the game really has been written by you, post a copy of it (always make several copies of the latest version of the program) in a well-sealed envelope to yourself by recorded delivery. When it arrives back at your home, don't open the envelope; the game is sealed within, which gives you proof of the date on which you completed it. Legally, your copyright in a game exists as soon as it is written – it's proving that date which is difficult.

Instead of posting it, you could leave it with your bank in a safe deposit box but the banks charge for this, and you need to have a bank account, too.

Or you could consider the National Software Register (see the article with this feature).

PRESENTATION POWER

So that the software houses know what your game is about, you should write quite detailed instructions, perhaps with some hints on how to get deep into the game quickly. Also, record a copy of the game onto a new, clean cassette. The more professional the program looks, the easier it will be to see its commercial potential.

Now you should be ready to send the next Number One to possible publishers. Try to spot similar programs to yours already on the market; if they are very similar, select competitors of the firm which publishes them – no software house will market two games the same. But if a particular house just publishes games in a similar *style* (like arcade, strategy, war, or adventure games) then it's worth approaching. Says Firebird's Colin Fuige: 'When designing a game compare it with our present range – that should give you some idea of what we're looking for.'

It's sensible to send a game to several software houses at once – that way, if they like it, you have a better idea of what sort of offer you can expect, and sometimes you can play them off against each other to get the best deal.

Choosing an appropriate software house is especially important if your program is slightly specialised – a utility or strategy game, for example. Firms such as PSS and CCS specialise in wargames, while Tasman might be worth approaching if you've written a companion program for a word processor.

But while software labels are becoming more markedly specialised, many of the big names are owned by the same few firms – so if you submitted your new game to Argus, for the sake of argument, it might be marketed as a Quicksilva title or on any of five or six other labels.

You might consider writing to budget software companies. Mastertronic, for example, would probably sell so many copies of your game that you would make just as much cash as if it were marketed by a slightly smaller, full-price software house – though advance payments tend to be smaller from budget companies.

And some firms (for example, Tynesoft) are even buying programmers' work specifically for compilations of new games.

FINISHING TOUCHES

With the increasing sophistication of the games world, you might fear that any game you produce at home can't be as good as something produced by teams of programmers working full-time for the larger firms. Well, the problem is surmountable. If a software house likes your idea it can provide help to improve the details of the game; lots of firms now have special music and graphics programmers. (Indeed, some houses – such as Code Masters – have been advertising for such specialists recently, and there'll be a feature on their work in the next CRASH.)



► Programmer Pete Cooke: good product sells, not big names, he says

Even if you feel your game isn't quite up to today's (mostly) high standards, you can still sell just the design and leave the software house to do the coding and create the game. Copyright is a particular problem here, because though particular chunks of code, text and so on can be copyrighted it's difficult to protect the general concept of a game.

CONTRACTING UNIVERSE

A contract is crucial for any agreement, no matter how well you get on with the software house – it's amazing how friendly some crooks can be when they want to exploit your work.

Programmers agree that a contract is essential, whether it's the formal 30 pages that Mirrorsoft offers or a two-page job from The Edge. But occasionally a software house will try to get you to sign an exclusive contract, so that when you sign your name on the proverbial dotted line and agree to assign it the marketing rights to *Jet Set Willy 17*, or whatever, the contract also legally obliges you to offer the same firm first refusal on all programs you write for the duration of the contract.

This should be avoided at all costs. If you do want to write more than one game for the same firm (which many programmers do when they get on well) you're free to do so, but if you've signed an exclusive contract and things go wrong you might have legal problems trying to write new stuff for other firms.

Try to retain the actual copyright to the program and sell just the marketing rights to each particular computer version; that way you control conversions and will get paid for them. (Usually the original programmer gets only royalties from conversions; whoever writes the conversion program gets a lump sum.)

One problem with retaining the copyright is that you'd have to pay your own legal expenses if you wanted to take someone to court for breach of copyright. But a friendly software house would probably help – after all, it's in the publisher's too to prevent rip-offs.

Try to include a clause which automatically returns all rights assigned under the contract to you in the event of the software house going bankrupt, ceasing to trade, or being taken over by new bosses with different ideas. History has shown that even the most seemingly stable of software houses can go bust at very short notice.

Check what is said about foreign sales – these often yield slightly less royalties than UK sales, but some software houses do more business abroad than in the UK. Also check to see whether the contract makes any contingency plans for your title being sold to a compilation, which is another growing trend.

It's sensible to include a time limit within which the firm must have launched your title. (On one occasion, I agreed to license the rights to a game in May, and it still wasn't launched that October; in the November, the software house went bust!)

It's usual, too, to set a limit on how long the software house has rights to the game. Contracts usually run for two years, but limiting it to one year means you can negotiate with budget firms or compilations for the rights after the game's sales at full price have died down (most arcade games reach their sales peak within a few weeks).

OF BIRDS AND BUSHES

And now the big bone of contention – how should you be paid, and how much? Most people prefer money *now* rather than the promise of it in the future; but you have to weigh up several factors. How much money will royalties give you (no-one can really answer that accurately), and over how long? How much interest can you earn on the lump sum being offered, and does it amount to the difference between likely royalty earnings and the lump sum? How much are you prepared to give up for the certainty of getting something?

There are no pat answers. Programmer Christian Urquhart (*Daley Thompson's Decathlon*) reckons you might get about £5,000 as an advance and as much as 20 per cent royalties on all sales, on a typical contract, but then what's a 'typical' contract? Other estimates place the royalty figure closer to 10 or 15 per cent.

Ideally, you'll be offered a nonreturnable advance on royalties, which gives you the best of all worlds: money now, yours to spend or earn interest on, and potentially high earnings if sales go well.

What royalty rate should you accept? Budget houses will inevitably offer you less money per copy sold than full-price houses will, but a budget game can sell ten or more times as many copies as a full-price. Try to get some estimate on sales figures from the software houses you talk to, and calculate likely royalties.

Differences in advertising, distribution, the label's reputation, packaging, and how much fine-tuning your game will get – all can affect sales.

Be careful to note whether the royalty rate you are offered refers to the retail price (ie what the public pays for the game in the shops) or the wholesale price (ie what the shops pay the software house and distributors for it), and whether these figures include VAT or not. Your payment will be calculated from the 'basic' price, which doesn't include VAT.

If you hear dodgy things about a firm, leave it well alone; most industry gossip has some foundation, and even if a firm is simply unpopular that can mean lower sales or bad reviews in some magazines. Probably most sharks have been found now, but some may still be lurking around – so talk to other programmers with the software house before you sign a contract and see if they're well-treated. 'Most programmers are taken for a ride from the start,' says Jon Ritman (*Head Over Heels*), burnt by an early experience: he got only £150 out of his first published game, the successful *Namtir Raiders*.

Finally: don't give up too easily. Just because you're new doesn't mean you won't succeed, even though some software houses receive as many as 100 games a week from hopefuls; unlike (say) the pop industry, explains programmer Pete Cooke (*Micronaut One*), 'it's not about an image' – software houses are just looking for good games. And if you honestly believe yours is good enough to sell keep hawking it around till someone agrees with you!

research: DOMINIC HANDY

SIGNING ON

THERE'S NO LAW in Britain specifically governing copyright on computer programs, though other software centres like America and Japan have such legislation. To protect games – or other software – here it's essential to have proof that you wrote it, and of *when* you wrote it.

That's what the National Software Register provides: it's an impartial, though profit-making, organisation which programmers can use. You simply send in a tape or disk with your work on and for a fee the NSR will store it – for as long as you live and 50 years thereafter. (When an author's been dead for 50 years his work passes into the public domain – no-one can hold the copyright).

The NSR's Gerald Coleman sees a growing legal problem in software copyright. 'After all,' he says, 'there will come a time when the output of computer programs exceeds that of the published word.'

Contact the NSR at *235 Chase Side, Enfield, Middlesex EN2 0RA*.

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PLEASE NOTE: this offer is subject only to the discounts detailed above; other discounts such as CRASH subscribers' extra discounts and the normal CRASH Mail Order bulk-buying discounts do not apply to games sold through this offer.

The games above were reviewed in Issues 43, 44 or 45 of CRASH, and *most* are available, but CRASH cannot guarantee that production copies are ready yet. If in doubt give Aggie (alias Carol Kinsey) a ring on (0584) 5820 to find out whether the delay will be longer than 28 days.

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MONTY CORRECTION

It's boo-boo time (you know I never make them really), and another spanking for me. In Issue 43 the POKEs for *Monty On The Run* had one line missing. Line 30 should read LOAD"" CODE. It must be my eyesight getting bad or something because I could have sworn it was right on John Bramley's letter. Oh well, thanks to Andrew Swain for pointing that out, and I'm sorry for any inconvenience it may have caused (but cheats never prosper, my old granny told me).

The garden's gone berserk, what with steamy rain, tropical heat and a full schedule at CRASH Towers. Sadly, no-one yet has come up with a POKE routine for weeding, pruning and incinerating the resulting rubbish. It's small consolation that the mail bag's full this month of POKEs, cheats, and maps for getting through games, but there you are.

There are POKEs for Hewson's *Zynaps* as well as *Great Gurianos* and *Airwolf II* from Elite's *Trio* compilation, and of course the usual wild selection from that great POKESter Jon North. But this months' top Tipster Award goes to Mark Hannan for his map of Imagine's *Game Over*. That's £20 worth of software on its way to you Mark.

MICRONAUT ONE

Stuart Henny and Garry Sinclair (any relation of Sir Clive?) from Scotland were playing *Micronaut One* when they came across some extremely useful tips. Being . . .

1. Collect the small clouds which float about the tunnels as these increase your energy.
2. Destroy all of the webs, this is done by shooting the grey blob.
3. Don't shoot the eggs, it wastes too much energy.
4. Only attend to the ETUs when they are at danger status or critical, otherwise you waste time.
5. The other objects you see in the tunnels are there just to get in your way, don't waste energy shooting them.
6. The first three levels are the tunnels of Ceres, the tunnels of Ganymede and the tunnels of Phobos.

AUF WIEDERSEHEN MONTY SOLUTION

The travelling rodent has at last found the solution to his quest in *Auf Wiedersehen Monty*. It comes from Mark Balham of Ipswich, and he informs me it isn't the only solution. Mark finished the game with 25,823 on the clock, so if you can better him you should be doing well. Just follow the list, l is for left, r is for right, d for down and u (amazingly enough) is for up.

From the start go u, u, u, get ticket, u, l, r, d, r, u, r, only get the left cheque, l, d, d, d, r, get football, l, u, r, leave cape, l, u, r, r, u, l, r, r, r, l, u, l, r, u, l, r, get cork, l, u, l, r, r, d, d, r, l, u, u, u, go left through the wall, d, l, r, u, go right through both walls, d, r, r, r, d, r, u, d, l, u, u, l, leave beer, l, u, d, r, r, ticket, u, l, touch boy, r, d, u, u, u, fly, d, get steering wheel, u, fly, d, d, l, ticket, fly, d, r, r, u, r, r, l, u, u, l, get mona lisa, u, r, u, go right through wall, d, r, r, r, get tools, d, touch cable car, d, u, l, l, u, l, ticket, r, fly, r, u, l, r, ticket, d, d, u, fly, u, d, l, l, r, r, d, r, d, r, d, l, fly, l, r, d, d, r, u, r, d, l, l, d, r, d, r, d, r, d, l, ticket, fly, ticket, d, d, r, d, touch lady, r, ticket, d, r, d, l, d, u, r, u, l, d, d, l, touch fence, r, u, u, fly, ticket, fly, d, d, r, r, r, r, d, r, d, r, ticket, fly, get bacon, d, d, d, fly, r, d, u, fly, d, r, d, r, d, r, d, d, l, AND THAT'S IT! (Remember to collect all the items that are not stated above except tickets.)

GALLETRON . . .

. . . didn't appeal to Al and Rick from Pirton, Hertfordshire, so they broke the protection and discovered a wee cheat mode.

When the game has loaded, press SYMBOL SHIFT once so everything stops. Then press C and a message should appear saying 'cheat mode'. When play begins you'll be blessed with infinite lives, but an old Indian guru once told me that immortality isn't all it's cracked up to be.

TRIO POKES

Elite System's great compilation, *Trio*, has received a lot of attention from the POKEs and Tips world. Here are a few POKEs from Tony Sollars of Leatherhead, Surrey, and David Wilson from Ayr in Scotland for *Great Gurianos*, and *Airwolf II*. I'll be printing some *3DC* POKEs as soon as I receive some.

GREAT GURIANOS

```
1 REM MULTIFACE ONE OWNERS CAN
  POKE 34962,0
10 BORDER 0: PAPER 0: INK 7: BRIGHT 1:
  CLS
20 CLEAR 60000
30 PRINT AT 10,9;"GREAT GURIANOS"
40 PRINT AT 12,11; FLASH 1;"START TAPE"
50 PRINT AT 21,5; INK 5;"HACKED BY TONY
  AND DAVE"
60 LOAD""CODE
70 POKE 65225,60: POKE 65226,254
80 POKE 64932,0: POKE 64942,0: POKE
  64959,0
90 POKE 64961,0: POKE 64963,0
100 FOR N=65084 TO 65115: READ A: POKE
  N,A: NEXT N
110 DATA 33,84,254,17,0,64,1,8
120 DATA 0,237,176,62,0,50,8,91
130 DATA 62,64,50,9,91,195,0,91
140 DATA 62,0,50,146,136,195,0,128
150 RANDOMIZE USR 64750
```

AIRWOLF II

```
1 REM MULTIFACE ONE OWNERS CAN
  POKE 53471,0
10 BORDER 0: PAPER 0: INK 7: BRIGHT 1:
  CLS
20 CLEAR 60000
30 PRINT AT 10,11;"AIRWOLF II"
40 PRINT AT 12,11;FLASH 1;"START TAPE"
50 PRINT AT 21,5;INK5;"HACKED BY TONY
  AND DAVE"
60 LOAD""CODE 64752
70 POKE 65225,60: POKE 65226,254
80 POKE 64934,0: POKE 64944,0: POKE
  64961,0:
90 POKE 64963,0: POKE 64965,0
100 FOR N=65084 TO 65115: READ A: POKE
  N,A: NEXT N
110 DATA 33,84,254,17,0,64,1,8
120 DATA 0,237,176,62,0,50,8,91
130 DATA 62,64,50,9,91,195,0,91
140 DATA 62,0,50,223,208,195,7,193
150 RANDOMIZE USR 64752
```

JON NORTH TIME

It's that time of the month again when everything in goes mad at CRASH Towers and Jon North sends in piles of POKEs for me to sift through (as if the pressure of working for CRASH wasn't enough!). This month, after much deliberation, I've chosen his *Star Fox* and *Rockman* routines for your delectation. The *Star Fox* routine fixes things so's when you run out of fuel the game carries on. The *Rockman* routine proffers the profligate cheat infinite lives.

STAR FOX

```
10 REM STAR FOX BY JON NORTH
20 CLEAR 25300: LET T=0
30 FOR F=32768 TO 32850
40 READ A: POKE F,A
50 LET T=T+(F-32758) * A: NEXT F
60 IF T=501844 THEN STOP
70 LOAD""CODE: RUN USR 32837
80 DATA 50,21,255,122,254
90 DATA 46,192,62,50,50
100 DATA 84,205,33,21,255
110 DATA 34,85,205,62,195
120 DATA 50,58,91,33,32
130 DATA 128,43,59,91,195
140 DATA 0,91,50,107,92
150 DATA 33,49,128,17,204
160 DATA 91,1,11,0,237
170 DATA 176,195,61,91,175
180 DATA 50,36,140,195,31
190 DATA 231,128,223,181,209
200 DATA 177,144,141,139,151
210 DATA 206,198,199,200,62
220 DATA 205,50,84,205,33
230 DATA 0,128,34,85,205
240 DATA 195,0,205
```

ROCKMAN

```
10 REM ROCKMAN BY JON NORTH
20 LET T=0
30 FOR F=32768 TO 32821
40 READ A: POKE F,A
50 LET T=T+(F-32758) * A: NEXT F
60 IF T=177518 THEN STOP
70 RANDOMIZE USR 32768
80 DATA 33,13,128,17,22
90 DATA 94,1,50,0,237
100 DATA 176,195,22,94,175
110 DATA 55,221,33,104,94
120 DATA 61,17,29,3,205
130 DATA 86,5,48,241,62
140 DATA 95,50,62,95,50
150 DATA 72,95,50,82,95
160 DATA 61,50,85,95,195
170 DATA 20,95,175,50,80
180 DATA 145,195,56,99
```

THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS

Guess what? You always thought James Bond did it through being clever, macho and English to boot, but as *The Living Daylights* proves, he fiddles, or at least Domark do, because there's a cheat mode built into the game. Once it's loaded get as many points as possible, but if in trouble press the number 2 and it whips through the stages. Good eh. This comes courtesy of Craig Lee Taberner **from Fitzwilliam. Thanks Craig.**

THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS (AGAIN)

So I lied, there's more Jon North **than I said, because he's finished his exams (phew!) and got back to some serious hacking, with the result that this landed on my desk at the last moment (how it found the space to touch down on something the size of a ping-pong bat I don't know).**

If the 'level' cheat is used, play the game as normal and then press abort (3 and 4 together) to go to the next level.

```
10 REM THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS
11 REM BY JON NORTH
12 REM CRASH SEPTEMBER 87
20 CLEAR 32970: LET T=0
30 FOR F=65280 TO 65320
40 READ A: POKE F,A
50 LET T=T+(F-65270) * A:NEXT F
60 IF T=143617 THEN STOP
70 INPUT "LIVES? Y/N"; A$
80 IF A$= "Y" THEN POKE 65281,0
90 INPUT "LEVELS? Y/N ";A$
100 IF A$= "Y" THEN POKE 65286,2
110 RANDOMIZE USR 65293
120 DATA 62,53,50,4,152
130 DATA 62,1,50,8,153
140 DATA 195,0,145,221,33
150 DATA 203,128,17,124,1
160 DATA 62,255,55,205,86
170 DATA 5,48,241,62,128
180 DATA 50,232,128,62,255
190 DATA 50,101,129,195,216
200 DATA 128
```

ATTENTION ALL MULTIFACE ONE USERS!

Owners of this little gadget are probably averse to typing in long POKE routines. The easy way to convert normal routines to the Multiface is quite simple, as Tom Price **from Exmouth, Devon explains:**

If the program has a long data statement at the end, look near the end of the statement for a 175 followed by a 50. The two numbers after it are the POKE. For example, look at *Ghost Hunters* (page 53 in the July CRASH, Issue 42) – **DATA 175,50,*214,216*** – *these are the POKES.*
To get the actual POKE number type *second number * 256 + first number*. So here you'd use *216 * 256 + 214*, which is 55510, so POKE 55510,0.

Sometimes there are several pokes to be found this way, as in *Army Moves* (same issue, page 57, starting on line 1190) . . .

DATA . . . 183,190,*175,50*,**94,209**,*50*,**181,190**,
221,33,221,33,221,34,99,254,*50*,**101,254** . . .

So the pokes work out at: POKE 53598,0: POKE 48821,0: POKE 65125,0
Easy! (But it doesn't apply every time . . .)

Here are some POKES for Multiface One owners who don't like typing massive listings (laziness is the leisure of the damned – granny again). They're from Colin Glaister **of Warrington and** Jay Salmon of Immingham.

WONDER BOY 48/128: POKE 52974,0
CATCH 23: POKE 46813,0 – Infinite gun cartridges
: POKE 61635,0 – Infinite bombs
REBEL: POKE 49958,0 – Invulnerability
: POKE 51139,0 – No life loss on laser miss
: POKE 49239,0:POKE 49249,0 – Infinite time
STORMBRINGER (48): POKE 40161,0
: POKE 38865,0
: POKE 46702,0
STORMBRINGER (128): POKE 28208,0
: POKE 29296,0
: POKE 29364,0
: POKE 36469,0
STAR GLIDER: POKE 54421,0 – Infinite missiles
: POKE 54450,0 – Missile time
JACK THE NIPPER: POKE 44278,58:POKE 44285,58 – Invincibility

GAME OVER



Game Ov er L
compil by



...Over Level One map ...ed by MARK HANNAN

GAME OVER

The Dinamic newie from Imagine may be giving some people a few problems (and if it isn't, what makes you so clever?), so here are tips from one S Sheppard **of Leconfield (somewhere near Hull), which may be of use. And then there's also the map of level one from** Mark Hannan.

On the first part, when shooting open a barrel always try and get in front of it and shoot back. This way if a bomb comes out you don't have to jump it, you can just walk off the screen.

Grenades aren't much use, so try and save them for screens 11 and 19 where the hazards are greater, such as the Giant Orko and the three giant robots. The best tip for these screens is to stay right back at the screen entrance and crouch down. Shoot continuously, and when the bullets aren't coming so fast, leap on the spot and lob a grenade whilst up in the air. To avoid the bullets it is useful (especially on the screen with the three robots) to duck down whilst shooting.

For the second part one useful tip is the location of the POW screen, which is found by going down the first lift and continuing right along the first platform.

To get past the eye at the very top of the prison you must repeatedly shoot the top statue (its eyes will light up) until you obtain a shield. Also duck down when shooting robots as their bullets are at mid-height.

If there's a Multiface One kicking around you may like to stick in the Spectrum and enter these codes for *Game Over* from Marcus **and** Damian Conway **of Smithills, Bolton – there again, you may not . . .**

Level One
39333,0 infinite lives
39273,201 infinite power
32416,0 infinite grenades

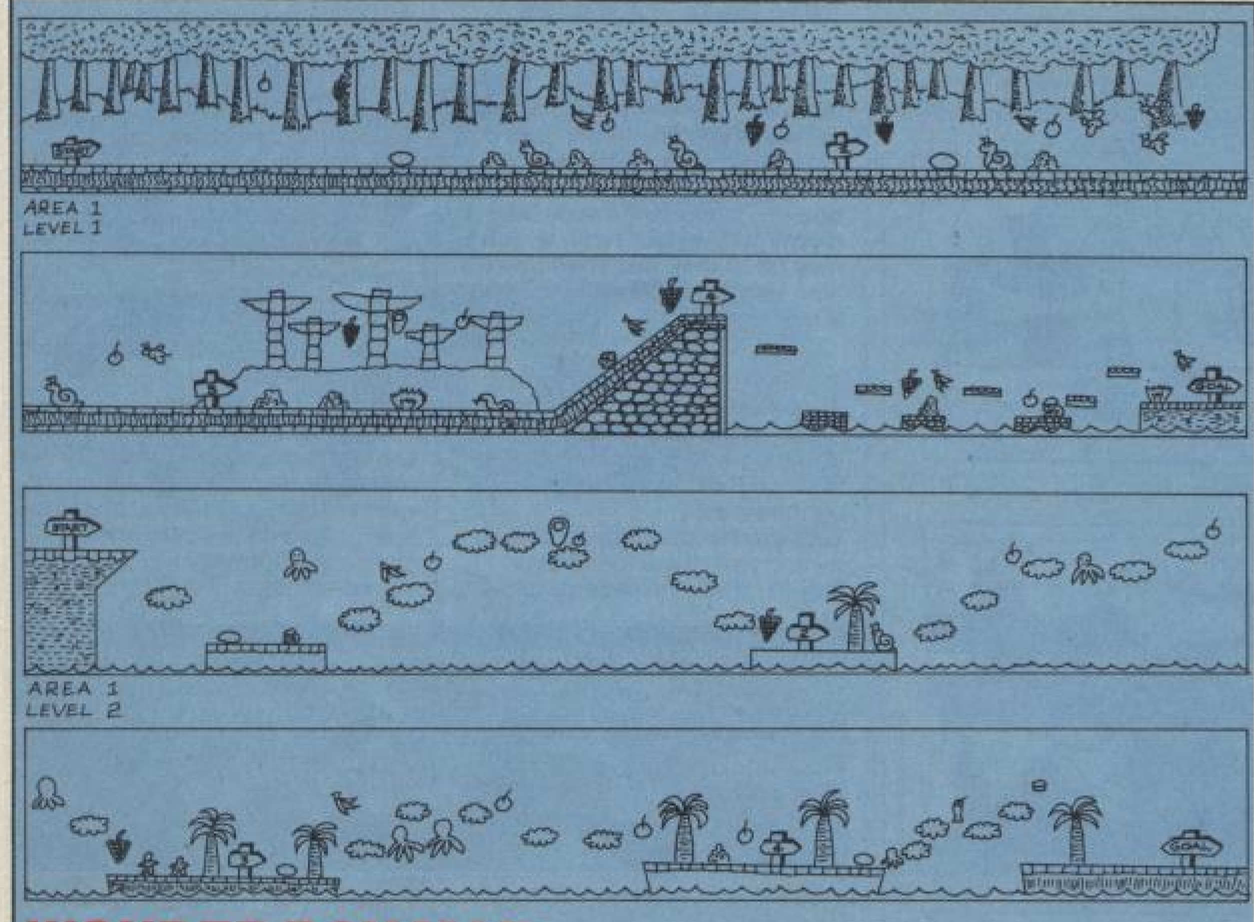
Level Two
38691,0 infinite lives
38631,201 infinite power
32378,0 infinite grenades

EXOLON

At last! The long awaited *Exolon* POKEs to take some of the pain out of Hewson's fantastic new game. Craig Wilkinson **from Cheshire is responsible for the hack, which came in on a tape – isn't modern technology wonderful?**

```
10 REM EXOLON CRASH SEPT 87
20 REM BY WICKED WILLY
30 CLEAR 25499: PRINT AT 11,2;"PLAY
   EXOLON TAPE FROM START": INK 7:
   LOAD"EXOLON"CODE
40 LET A=25500
50 READ B: IF B<>999 THEN POKE A,B: LET
   A=A+1: GOTO 50
60 RANDOMIZE USR 25500
90 REM DON'T DELETE LINES 100 OR 140
100 DATA
   33,0,252,17,80,195,1,19,0,237,176,62,20
   1,50,99,195,205,8 0,195 ,33,
   184,99,34,111,254,195,19,252
110 DATA
   62,0,50,29,157,33,0,0,34,125,104,34,77,1
   12: REM INFINITE LIVES
120 DATA 62,0,50,110,131: REM INFINITE
   BULLETS
130 DATA 62,0,50,80,146: REM INFINITE
   GRENADES
140 DATA 195,96,109,999
```

For Multiface One owners: Infinite lives: POKE 40221,0:POKE 26749,0:POKE 26750,0:POKE 28749,0:POKE 28750,0
Infinite bullets: POKE 33646,0
Infinite rockets: POKE 37456,0



WONDER BOY MAP

That downright dirty and evil king still has your heart-throb, Tina, so David Loughton **and** Anthony Plant **have mapped the game to make your quest a mite easier.**

SCEPTRE OF BAGDAD

And now, after making you wait for simply ages, here's what you've all been waiting for, the final part of the *Sceptre Of Bagdad* solution from Robert Gorst. **If you're not a regular CRASH reader (and how come, seeing as it's illegal not to be?) the first part was printed in Issue 44 (September, which is last month – so it wasn't that, long to wait, now was it?).**

You should by now have a MIRROR and a FISH HELMET. Go back to where you left the SHARPENED TRUNK, pick it up and leave behind the FISH HELMET. Now go to the room which is one left from the starting room and enter the door. Slide down the banister, go left, left again, walk to the left and get rid of the Medusa, and then go left again to kill Cyclops. Go all the way back to the room to the left of the start and follow these steps to make a BOW, QUIVER and LAMP with the STRING:

1. **The BOW:** Take the WHIP from the balcony, one room right from the start. Then take this to the shops, and the furthest room on the right contains a BULL and WAGON. Jump up to the wheel's spokes on the WAGON and you should have a full AXLE. Go to the oyster room, turn right and replace the axles of the drawbridge. Grab the SLIPPERS where you left them and walk across the drawbridge. Walk right to the hot coals, walk over these and keep going until you get to an island. Take the BOW but don't drop the SLIPPERS. Walk back over the coals and drop the BOW in a place where you can remember it.
2. **The STRING:** First get the INSECT NET from the same floor as the opening wardrode and next to the blue and yellow bean bag(?), take the NET to the BEE which came from the HIVE and it should go. Your NET is now full. Go to the first room left of the starting room and take the SWORD, without dropping the NET. Go through the door, slide down, go right, go towards the STRING and jump at it to collect it. Leave the STRING somewhere safe.
3. **The QUIVER:** This is easier. Just go to the empty statue pedestal, jump to the top of it, fall down and take the QUIVER, leaving it somewhere safe.
4. **The LAMP:** Take the WHISK from the room with the BEACHBALLS, three rooms away left of the start. Go to the green platform between the two trees, (past the wardrobe room, down the stairs and right). Use the DOOR KEY, go down the hole, and there should be a wizard awaiting you, flailing his arms about!

* Now his smoke has gone, walk towards the lamp and leave it somewhere safe. Now this is the order you should collect them: Pick up the BOW, then the STRING, drop the STRING, pick up the QUIVER, drop the QUIVER and pick up the LAMP. Now go to the room first left from the start, go through the door, down the banister, left, left, and left again until you get to a SEE-SAW (ahh!).

Walk to the end of the SEE-SAW then he will aim his BOW and ARROW at the STRING, the BOULDER hanging from the STRING will now drop onto the other side of the SEE-SAW and catapult you into the Sceptre room. The SCEPTRE is on a pedestal and you must take it and get teleported by the clouds. If you don't get the SCEPTRE and teleport then repeat the process again, starting from the point marked *.

If you get the SCEPTRE, just keep going right until you have reached the balcony, walk to the edge and you have completed the game with 100%

Handy tip: if you can try and get someone to read out the solution while you play the game, it's a big help, but if not, read it on to a tape and play it back. But you'd already thought of that, hadn't you!

SATCOM

Dial the number given on the inlay (515-626160 same each game), you will get through to a company called GLOBAL ATMOSPHERICS UK. Press Space to return to control, select ANALYSIS – select DATA work out code

Dial GLOBAL – enter code. Select No. 2 on menu – press Space, select No. 1 on menu – press Space, a third option appears, select No. 3 on menu. Press Space to return to control, select ANALYSIS – select DATA work out code.

Dial GLOBAL, work your way back to second code. A telephone list will be displayed, note down the Numbers.

There's no point in phoning NASA yet because SATCOM cannot work out the code. It is however, located at CREATIVE ELECTRONICS LTD (CEL).

If you dial CON you will indeed be CONned, since all get is a system overload.

Dial TECH TRANSMITTERS LTD (TTL). Press Space to return to control, select ANALYSIS – select DATA, work out code. Dial TTL – enter code, note down which satellite has had extra equipment fitted. Press Space to return to control.

Dial LION, press Space to return to control, select ANALYSIS – select DATA, work out code.

Dial LION – enter code. Note down the load code No. for the AD COUNT DOWN software, press Space to return to control.

Dial CAMEO LASER REFRACTORS (CLR) Note down the colour order of the top four colour bars, ie (red-purple-green-blue), press Space to return to control.

Dial CREATIVE ELECTRONICS LTD (CEL). Press Space to return to control. Select ANALYSIS – select DATA, work out code.

Answer (N) then (Y). Note down the NASA ident code and reverse it. Press Space.

Dial NASA. Enter reversed code, select correct satellite (you noted it down) enter AD COUNT DOWN code (you noted it down), wait for each number to be logged, press Space, press Space again to return to control. Select ANALYSIS – select DATA, work out code.

Dial NASA and repeat this procedure on the other two codes.

After you enter the third code (Auto Destruct) and provided you are trying to destroy the correct satellite and the correct software is loaded (AD COUNT DOWN), then you will arrive at the orbital VDU display.

You must now arrange the coloured boxes in the order of the coloured bars in the CLR advert. The way to do this is to place the last colour first and then the second colour, etc.

And that's it, you've earned a medal!

LLOYD'S 'OOOPS I'M INCREDIBLY SORRY' CORNER

Whooops! If something goes wrong blame the typesetting machine – I usually do. A few things went wrong in the August CRASH (Issue 43) too late to be corrected. Firstly . . .

FUTURE KNIGHT EDITOR

You have to press the **EDIT F** and **K** keys, not the S and K keys as I said before. Also, if you press the **C** key you can redefine the graphics and **X** to get back to the proper place. Prodding the **D** key allows you to move back a graphic.

And secondly . . .

HEAD OVER HEELS

. . . in which there were a few incorrect lines. Rather than just print those, here's the whole listing again – correctly this time . . .

```
1 CLEAR 64500
2 LET T=0:LET W=1
5 FOR F=32000 TO 32170
10 READ A:POKE F,A
15 LET T=T+A * W:LET W=W+1
20 NEXT F
25 IF T<>1764297 THEN PRINT "DATA
   ERROR": STOP
30 PRINT AT 10,1;"START HEAD OVER
   HEELS TAPE"
50 RANDOMIZE USR 32000
100 DATA 221,33,203,92,17,234
110 DATA 6,62,255,55,205,86,5
120 DATA 48,241,243,237,94,33
130 DATA 44,125,229,33,173,98
140 DATA 229,51,51,17,163,252
150 DATA 1,22,3,33,253,94,62
160 DATA 202,237,79,195,173,98
170 DATA 33,70,125,229,33,199
180 DATA 252,229,51,51,17,209
190 DATA 253,1,232,2,33,209,252
200 DATA 62,196,237,79,195,199
210 DATA 252,33,209,17,209
220 DATA 138,1,92,0,237,176,33
230 DATA 228,138,34,233,138,34
240 DATA 237,138,33,218,138,34
250 DATA 245,138,33,255,138,34
260 DATA 9,139,62,195,50,29,139
270 DATA 33,116,125,34,30,139
280 DATA 195,209,138,175,50
290 DATA 166,255,62,195,50,99
300 DATA 255,33,250,250,34,100
310 DATA 255,33,145,125,17,250
320 DATA 250,1,50,0,237,176,195
330 DATA 55,255,33,0,0,34,113
340 DATA 163,33,34,25,34,115
350 DATA 163,62,33,50,120,163
360 DATA 50,123,163,49,255,255
370 DATA 195,48,112
```

And thirdly . . . the POKEs for *Monty On The Run* had one line missing. Line 30 should read **LOAD""CODE**. It must be my eyesight's getting bad, because I could have sworn it was right on John Bramley's letter. Still, thanks to **Andrew Swain** for pointing that one out, and I'm sorry for any inconvenience it may have caused (but cheats never prosper, my old granny told me).

A FEW CHEAT MODES

A being authentically called Thistle from Scotland **sent in some really useful cheat modes and codes for brand new games. And** F R Stewart **finished off the list with some cheats for *Cobra* and *Jack The Nipper*.**

EXOLON Go to redefine keys mode and then type ZOBRA for infinite lives.

ROAD RUNNER While in the options screen, and during the scrolling message, press RTHB together for infinite lives, and WVKLO to see the end sequence.

MOUNTIE MICK'S DEATHRIDE Once the game has started, press K once to become invulnerable to bullets.

COBRA Press the Space bar and Z or X, and it slows everything down.

JACK THE NIPPER Go to the police station with the horn and toot it at the safe. Your naughtiness will rise.

HEAD OVER HEELS

Following the POKEs I printed two months ago, the intrepid duo now have a cheat to help them in their quest. It comes courtesy of Scott Dickson **from bonny Scotland.**

1) Guide Head right, through the door until he comes up against the wall. (swap) Turn Heels to face the wall. Now switch baek to Head and keep the fire button pressed. When Head jumps to his full height, repeatedly tap the swap key and Head jumps over the wall. If it doesn't work first time, let go of all the buttons and try again (but you must start with Head jumping).

2) 'What's the use of that,' I hear you cry. Well for a start it saves time and effort on the 'bag' screen. And by the way, to get Head and Heels back over the wall, put Heels on top of Head (right against the wall), keep the fire button pressed and repeatedly tap the swap key. This gets Heels over the wall, then to get Head over the wall repeat stage one.

ZYNAPS

To kick off with here's a POKE routine for Hewson's July shoot-'em-up Smash. It comes from a person with the discreet name of Mel the Cheat. **You can chose invincibility and 1-255 lives.**

```
10 REM ZYNAPS POKE CRASH OCT 87
20 REM BY MEL THE CHEAT
30 BORDER 0: PAPER 0: INK 7
40 CLEAR 32767
50 LET I=62
60 INPUT "HOW MANY LIVES (1-255)?";N
70 INPUT "INVINCIBLE (Y/N)?";A$
80 IF A$="Y" THEN LET I=201
90 PRINT AT 11,0;"START ZYNAPS TAPE
   FROM START"
100 LOAD""CODE
110 POKE 64531,214
130 RANDOMIZE USR 64512
140 POKE 65115,15
150 FOR I=23311 TO 23323
160 READ A: POKE F,A: NEXT F
170 DATA 62,N,50,208,175
180 DATA 62,I,50,95,155
190 DATA 195,0,128
200 RANDOMIZE USR 65082
```

Or alternatively, if you have a Multiface One, Marcus & Damian Conway have discovered these POKEs for you. POKE 45424,0: POKE 45425,0: POKE 45426,0 **which gives you infinite lives; and** POKE 39775,201 **which provides invincibility.**

Well, that's the fun over for another month. Thanks for all your contributions, but please stop all the letters with SAEs because I can't reply to them. If you're desperate to get tips on older games, I'm afraid you'll just have to get back numbers from the appropriate division of Newsfield Empires Inc (talk to Aunt Aggie, aka Carol Kinsey, aka she who lives in the basement). Don't forget to send all your tips and POKEs to the usual address, which is LLOYD MANGRAM'S PLAYING TIPS, CRASH, *PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB*. As for me (seeing as how it's how the small hours), I'm off for a well-earned cup of tea.

DADDY, WHERE WERE YOU WHEN CRASH STARTED?

The CRASH & Spectrum Software History
a four-part series to collect

On the facing page starts the first in a series of four 24-page pull-out supplements, which will build up into a history of Spectrum software over the past four years. And in the December and Christmas Special issues of CRASH a complete index to every game ever reviewed in CRASH will be printed to add to the part work.

Each month's supplement consists of 12 CRASH covers, presented as they were originally printed (or as nearly as we can recreate one or two of the earlier ones), backed by a short article written by Lloyd Mangram, detailing events in the month of the cover.

He talks about the games reviewed, the software houses involved and reactions to the software, all set against a background of how CRASH happened. Intimate stories, many never before revealed, illustrate the problems besetting the small team which launched CRASH and explain how it grew to be the magazine it is today.

It may seem self-indulgent publishing our own history after only four years, but these have been a frenzied 1,460 days – and it isn't only our own history, but also that of the Spectrum computer and the enormous number of people who because of their interest, faith and imagination made it the most successful of machines.

This is a retrospective, not a funeral, a celebration and not a wake. The four years' worth of covers are concluded in the Christmas Special, Issue 48. In the New Year CRASH will be offering a special binder in which to keep the part work of covers as well as the index, which will list every software review, playing tip and map ever published in CRASH – and many of the features and interviews besides.

It's not yet known what price this binder will be, but details will be published in CRASH before Christmas.

And now over to Lloyd . . .

Please note: the supplement is not held by its own staples. Carefully lever up the two staples holding the entire issue, and lift out the 24 pages. You can then press the staples together again to keep the magazine intact. The supplement pages will eventually be held together by the binder. The CRASH History will be numbered continuously from page 1 to 96, not as part of the magazines.

CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

FEBRUARY 1984
No. 1
75p

THE MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW



THE BIGGEST SPECTRUM SOFTWARE MAGAZINE . . .

OVER 400 GAMES REVIEWED

TOP 20 PHONE-IN
THE CRASH HOTLINE

JOYSTICKS
BOON OR A PAIN?
& WHICH ONE TO BUY?

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WRATH OF MAGRA!

SHOOT EM UP!
Invaders Galaxians - we compare some versions

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Become a Reviewer for CRASH!
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in our Reviewers Competition!

ENTER THE MONTHLY
CRASH QUIZ!!!
PRIZES TO BE
WON

February 1984
Issue No. 1

Released on January 13th

The 'Chairman', as he's now known, hangs in the Newsfield boardroom. This first cover of CRASH was not based on any particular game, but took its inspiration from the chrome-teethed, machine-oil-dripping alien from the film Alien. *It's really a simple gag – an alien playing* Space Invaders, *the screen reflected in his eyes. The object was to provide a striking and ferocious image to leap off the news shelves, and to declare to the world that CRASH was very different to existing computer magazines with their reliance on photographed hardware.*

Work started on the first issue of CRASH well before Christmas 1983. The editorial team, which was to remain unchanged for three months, consisted of Roger Kean, Oliver Frey, Lloyd Mangram and Matthew Uffindell, a 17-year-old who had been buying software from Crash Micro Games Action mail order. As he lived nearby, he popped in to purchase games and somehow never quite left. Many of CRASH's early reviewers were recruited in this fashion. Matthew now works in Newsfield's art department as a senior film planner – one of the people who put the images on film, ready for the printers.

At the 1983 PCW Show, held at the Barbican that year, Roger Kean and CRASH financial director Franco Frey roved around the stands trying to convince software houses that a really new magazine was about to arrive. Interest was generally luke warm, but nevertheless, by mid-December when the issue had to be ready, 27 pages of advertising had been sold – enough to provide CRASH with the funds to print!

The original concept behind CRASH had been to provide a low-key, low-cost magazine, mostly in monochrome, to attract the numerous software houses who couldn't afford the advertising rates of the existing glossies, so several of the first issues were printed on cheap newsprint with a heavier colour section wrapped around. As it turned out, most advertisers opted for colour advertisements and so gradually CRASH became as glossy (and as expensive to advertise in) as the rest. It was while Roger was driving to Milton Keynes to watch the first colour coming off the press that he was stopped by the police for speeding – at 3.30 in the morning. On explaining to the officers that he was rushing to a birth, he was let off with a caution. He's never broken a speed limit since . . .

Issue One had lots to offer, including an amazing 60 reviews, the first time ever so much space had been devoted to Spectrum games. Among them were notables like *Zaxxan* from Starzone, a bunch of youngsters who later got into a legal wrangle with US Gold when the official version of *Zaxxon* was released, *Bugaboo (The Flea)* from Quicksilva, which got 92% and would have been a Smash had there been Smashes in those days, and of course the Game of the Month, Micromega's *3-D Deathchase* – still a great thrill to play. Programming innovations were still largely a thing of the future, but Sandy White's *Ant Attack* (Quicksilva) raised some eyebrows, although I remember Matthew and I feeling that it lacked something in the gameplay.

Then there was the fabled Living Guide, which was to run for the first four issues before it became too unwieldy to cope with. It listed every game you could lay your hands on under classified headings like 'Platformers', 'Maze Games' and so on. Matthew and another young reviewer, Chris Passey, provided a comparison of Invader/Galaxian games in Run It Again, Franco reviewed and compared joystick interfaces, we launched the first ever readers' hotline chart, and offered readers the chance to become a CRASH reviewer in a competition. Interestingly, one of its runners-up was a young man by the name of John Minson, but more of him much later . . .

We also profiled Rabbit Software, Blaby Games and Carnell, who were finishing their much-heralded *Wrath of Magra*. And to round off, I did my first ever look back at the software year. The weakest spot in that first CRASH (and for several issues) was the lack of a proper adventure reviewer. Buried deep in the Living Guide were mini reviews of *Star Trek* and *Velnor's Lair*, two games from a tiny outfit called Neptune, operated by one Derek Brewster . . .



MARCH 1984
No. 2
75p

CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

THE MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW



THE BIGGEST SPECTRUM SOFTWARE MAGAZINE . . .

OVER 400 GAMES REVIEWED

BRITAIN'S FIRST PHONE-IN TOP SOFT CHART

REACH FOR THE STAR ZONE
Profile on STARZONE & Hewson programmer STEVE TURNER

ROLL OUT THE BARREL
Kong games - we compare versions

CLIP ON - SPEAK OUT
Currah µSpeech
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PLUS; A TRIP TO IMAGINE; NEWS; & MUCH MORE

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SPECTRUM

100 to go! WIN A COPY OF DOOMSDAY CASTLE

& PRIZES TO WIN IN THE CRASH QUIZ

March 1984
Issue No. 2

Released on February 16th

Coming from a film-making background, Oliver Frey loves powerful images and classic Thirties and Forties monochrome movies, interests never better reflected than in the second CRASH cover. It celebrated the proliferation of Donkey Kong *clones on the Spectrum at the time, and related to the Run It Again article in the issue comparing Mario's many attempts to rescue his girl from the overgrown ape's clutches. Note Kong's cavalier treatment of the Spectrum itself – Oliver is to use the computer repeatedly in cover illustrations as a player in the drama, quite revolutionary in 1984.*

It was a bit of a conceit to state on the cover 'Over 400 Games Reviewed' (345 were in the Living Guide), but the gung-ho exclamation ideally indicates the small CRASH team's euphoria at public reaction to Issue One – we wanted everyone to know that we were the biggest and the best!

Attitudes within the trade were equally invigorating; several specialist shops acclaimed CRASH as the long-awaited Spectrum Bible. Even *Computer & Video Games* sent us a congratulations card, but I fear they saw us as no competition, merely a local fanzine to be encouraged; few people at the time realised that as many as 50,000 copies of Issue One sold nationally. It was a heady figure and one not to be repeated for quite some time.

February's weather, however, brought CRASH down to earth. The schedule ran late. Oliver worked for 30 hours nonstop to complete Terminal Man, while John Edwards, newly-recruited advertisement manager, stood anxiously by, waiting to take the layout boards down to the London printer who wanted to start at 9.30am. John had to catch the 6am train from Birmingham New Street. At 4am on a freezing winter morning Oliver finished, but Roger Kean (who was still working on the Living Guide) did not.

At 5am, the boards still four pages incomplete, Roger drove John the 40 miles to Birmingham through a heavy snow storm. After ten minutes they were stuck on a steep hill outside Ludlow. Turning back to try another route, they came across a skidded lorry with its nose in a ditch. The unfortunate driver turned out to be a local newstrade wholesaler, delivering magazines to Ludlow. Seeing the CRASH boards, as they gave him a lift back into town, the driver exclaimed excitedly. He owned a Spectrum and had loved the first issue. So there they were, John frustrated, Roger struggling with the terrible conditions, and a mad lorry driver who wanted nothing more than to talk about high scores on *Lunar Jetman*!

They got through in the end, the printer did the job in time, and Issue Two did arrive. To many people's horror, there were *five* Games Of The Month ('confusing to have so many,' wrote one reader), and in their very different ways they indicated that Spectrum games were improving rapidly and almost beyond belief. Top was Ultimate's classic *Atic Atac*, but *Android 2* showed Costa Panayi flexing his muscles for Vortex with the best 3-D effects yet seen. Like the first two, *Krakatoa* (Abbex) offered large graphics which were a novelty in early 84, combined with complex gameplay and a wicked sense of humour (also a rare commodity). *Scuba Dive* (Durell) also boasted large and effectively fishy graphics with interestingly different game objectives, while Microsphere's *Wheelie* was to prove one of the most addictive games of the year.

We also ran our first 'real' competition, for Fantasy, promoting *Doomsday Castle*. It was so successful that it set the pattern for an increasing number of competitions thereafter.

Because of their oddly unergonomic arrangement, games only offering the cursors for control lost percentage points badly in those days! But we praised small-company inventiveness in an article examining some joysticks which were actually attached to the Spectrum to physically manipulate the cursed cursors. Franco had a good listen to Currah's ahead-of-its-time speech unit, and Hewson's Steve Turner was interviewed as well as the four lads from Starzone.

I also had quite a few letters to print and answer – among them was a complaint that at five pounds, the price of software was far too high. Things never change . . .

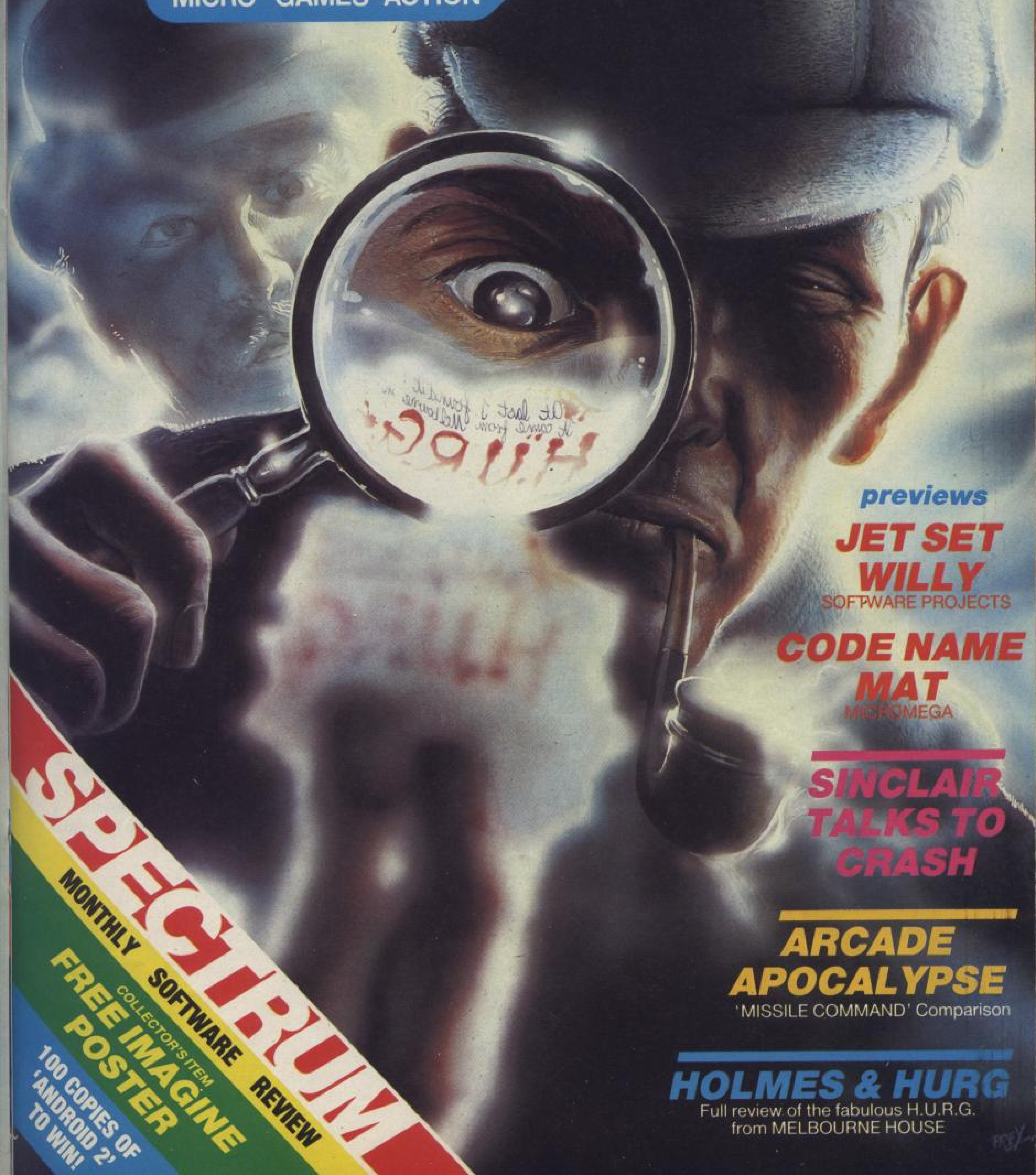


CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

APRIL 1984

75p



previews

JET SET WILLY
SOFTWARE PROJECTS

CODE NAME MAT
MICROMEGA

SINCLAIR TALKS TO CRASH

ARCADE APOCALYPSE
'MISSILE COMMAND' Comparison

HOLMES & HURG
Full review of the fabulous H.U.R.G. from MELBOURNE HOUSE

SPECTRUM
MONTHLY SOFTWARE REVIEW

COLLECTOR'S ITEM
FREE IMAGINE POSTER

100 COPIES OF 'ANDROID 2' TO WIN!

April 1984
Issue No. 3

Released on
March 22nd

This cover first demonstrated Oliver Frey's ability to combine several disparate elements into one picture. It related to an article on Melbourne House and Australian Philip Mitchell, who programmed The Hobbit *and was working on the very delayed* Sherlock Holmes. *Melbourne's* H.U.R.G. *(High Level User-Friendly Real Time Games Designer) had nothing to do with Philip, but was reviewed in the issue, so Oliver melded the two ideas by having Sherlock peer through his magnifying glass in which is reflected (backwards) a clue to* H.U.R.G.

With monthly pressures getting tough, we all welcomed the arrival in Ludlow of David Western, a one-time colleague of Roger Kean. David lent a valued hand to the artwork layout, allowing Roger to concentrate more on the writing and planning. The stress is plainly seen in the cover, which had no issue number, and on the contents page, where Roger happily but erroneously stated it was Issue Four! David, now Newsfield's Production Controller, was (and still is) an excellent photographer, and the marked improvement in our screen shots was noted.

Taking pictures from a monitor is no simple matter, and all CRASH had at the time was a rented 14-inch telly! I can remember getting in the engineer to look at it because all the colour was being pulled into one corner leaving the rest black-and-white. The bemused man took it away and brought another, shaking his head, saying only a strong magnet could produce such an effect. I refrained from telling him that David had been waving his very powerful light meter over the screen – it contained a massive magnetic field!

Further improvements in picture quality had to wait until the wonderful Microvitec Cub monitor arrived for review, but with David's ministrations, people everywhere began praising our colour screen shots, at least (they appear so fuzzy now).

CRASH was, unwittingly, about to unleash a media war. We regarded ourselves as specialist enthusiasts, and so news of any program in progress excited us, and we wanted to convey that feeling to the readers. We were also very chatty with software houses, so it came as no surprise that we were easily able to get very advanced screen shots of Matthew Smith's unfinished *Jet Set Willy*, possibly the most eagerly awaited game of all time. As a result, CRASH was the first to print pictures, despite plenty of interest in the project from other magazines.

On top of that, through close and friendly relations with Micromega, we were also the first to spot the potential of *Code Name Mat* by Derek Brewster. When it was first shown to us, it had no name, and the joke became current that Mat referred to Matthew Uffindell, the CRASH reviewer who was the first player in the country to get his hands on it – and who knows, it may be true!

All this frenzied previewing activity put CRASH markedly ahead of the other magazines at the time, but they soon started fighting back and the scrabble for advance information was on in earnest. The trick, however, was not only to be first with words and pictures, but also to spot the real winners. We weren't always right . . .

Issue Three showed another improvement – the paper. The printer was changed and CRASH went fully glossy. Games Of The Month were given a logo on the review page instead of being bunched up at the start, the first of these being *Blue Thunder* (Richard Wilcox, soon to be absorbed by his family into Elite Systems), *Cavern Fighter* from Bug-Byte, and *Night Gunner* by Digital Integration. Although Matthew, Roger and I liked *Blue Thunder*, there was an adverse reaction from some readers, but everyone seemed agreed that the graphically uninspiring *Cavern Fighter* was a damned good 'Scramble' game.

Hardware novelty object was Stack's Light Rifle, which caused battles between Matthew and Chris Passey to use it. It was fun but hardly earthshatteringly good, and it's amusing now to see the games consoles bringing the idea back – with somewhat more accurate results.

Oh, and we did the first ever CRASHtionnaire to find out how well readers thought the magazine was doing.



CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

No4 MAY 1984

75p



ADVENTURE

DRIPPING GOLD
Gilsoft's THE QUILL spawns monsters

Time to set off on our
ADVENTURE TRAIL

WALKING THE PLANK
Software and Piracy

KEYBOARD REMBRANDTS
We look at some Draw Utilities

SWEET TALKING
Is it catching?

SPECTRUM
MONTHLY SOFTWARE REVIEW

INCENTIVE'S MILLIONAIRE COMPETITION £1,000 OF PRIZES TO WIN

May 1984
Issue No. 4

Released on April 26th

Still relying principally on the dynamics of a large, powerful face for a cover image, Oliver turned his attention to the adventure market. He'd done many illustrations for books dealing with mystery and horror subjects, and since so many adventures featured evil wizards and sorcerers, the character on this cover sprang easily enough to mind. Discussion, however, revealed that Oliver was unhappy with the finished picture because it didn't seem to have any computer relevance. Roger suggested adding the 'what now' cursor to the eye and the visual gag was complete.

Reflecting the cover, and probably because he felt guilty at not covering adventure games as much as he should have done, Roger Kean spent many hours writing an adventure with Gilsoft's new machine code utility, *The Quill*. As I can testify, the result was quite unpublishable, but the time wasn't wasted because he managed to write a fulsome article on the use of *The Quill*, as well as reviewing several Gilsoft *Quill*ed adventures.

This was a time when young hopeful programmers expected to get their games accepted for publishing for the simple reason that they had written them. To some professional programmers *The Quill* seemed a frightening idea, a means of making adventure-writing simple, so anyone could do it and take away their living. But *The Quill* was a tool, not a source of inspiration, and it proved that there can never be any substitute for imagination.

Still with adventures, Issue Four saw the modest beginning of Derek Brewster's Adventure Trail. For some weeks, Derek had been persuading Roger that CRASH desperately needed someone who understood the genre to write a proper column. Politically, appointing Derek to the chair was a good move, for he had a pedigree both with adventure and arcade games (his *Code Name Mat* was one of the CRASH Smashes, which made their first appearance in this issue too). There were a lot of points to be earned for the still-struggling magazine by having a notable like Derek write for it – and it was a nice one in the eye for the more established titles!

In addition to *Code Name Mat*, with its complexity of 3-D space gameplay, others in the new Smash breed included two from Software Projects, *Jet Set Willy* (about to cause havoc by being both immensely exciting to play and containing the famous 'Attic Bug' that stopped you from completing the game!) and the appealing but difficult *Tribble Trouble*. Steve Turner finally got his reward for long service with a Smash for Hewson's *3-D Lunattack*, and for further pushing forward the barriers of his major interest, realistic-perspective games.

It was also a time when large concerns not normally involved in computer games tried testing the water. One of the biggest, Thorn EMI, launched some games through its label, Creative Sparks, and *Orc Attack* became a Smash, not so much for its graphics, which were amusing, but for its fiendishly difficult gameplay. Creative Sparks was to have a roller-coaster existence, finally ending up as Creative Sparks Distribution, which recently went into receivership.

But one small, as yet unknown, software house made its first appearance in CRASH that month with a game we really liked, one largely ignored by other magazines. It was *Ad Astra* and the programmers had thought, perhaps, of calling themselves Gargoyle Games . . .

This was the issue where we revealed the CRASH Reviewers competition results. The blurb noted that the winner had won by a faint margin. One of the runners-up was a certain John Minson. To think, had the margin been a touch fainter he could have been writing for CRASH at a fraction of the exorbitant fee he now commands! Well, we all make mistakes. Looking at his entry, there's little to suggest that this man will one day turn into a voracious ligger of vituperative prose and metamorphose into the Hunter S Minson we all know and . . .

May's Living Guide dealt with board games, simulations, strategies and adventures. At the end it said 'Next Month: Arcade Games', but the Guide had become too huge to fit in, and too much effort for the overworked team – it was destined never to return.




No 5 JUNE 1984 75p
CRASH
MICRO GAMES ACTION
THE ONE BIG SPECTRUM SOFTWARE MAG
GAMES TIPS
HELPLINE
CRASHLINE
ADVENTURES
UTILITIES
SPECTRUM
MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW
HOW TO WIN JET SET WILLY!
CRASH COURSE
A look at some Learning Software
COMPETITION COSMOS:
BRILL PRIZES GALORE!!
PSS
CRASH QUIZ
MICROMANIA
ULTIMATE
MELBOURNE HOUSE
STACK
CDS

June 1984
Issue No. 5

Released on May 24th

Having had his fill of page-compressed faces of alien monsters, giant apes, famous detectives and evil warlocks, Oliver broke out with this space action cover. No particular game was in mind apart from the defender/scramble concept, but the idea for a canyon constructed of game cassettes was Roger Kean's. It was a typical situation in the early days for Oliver to think up an idea, for Roger, David or Matthew to rework it as a visual gag, which Oliver would then implement so interestingly. And this picture long remained a favourite with readers.

The cover slogan, *The ONE BIG Spectrum Software MAG*, wasn't merely bombast, it was actually an aggressive parody of *Big K*'s logo. *Big K* was another example of a large corporation (IPC) testing the software waters, in this case with a magazine, but though it was a multiuser title, *Big K*'s prelaunch blurb strode across preserves we at CRASH regarded as peculiarly our own at the time, namely being irreverent about software (though of course we also thought we were the only really serious ones – that's called having your cake *and* eating it).

When I look at the contents page of Issue Five, the thing that strikes me now is that of all the sections competitions was actually the biggest – seven DIYs – proving the point that we recognised their popularity. But one of those competitions stands out markedly, the *Atic Atac* map. Game maps were unheard of in publications in 1984 – it simply hadn't occurred to anyone that mapping a game was relevant, but there was no doubt that some games being produced were actually made up from maps in the programmers' minds. *Atic Atac* was one such, and certainly one where having a map before you helped playing it. There was also the fear that printing a game map might upset the software house, for games stayed upon the shop shelves far longer then than they do today. It was definitely a feather in the CRASH cap to sign a competition deal with Ultimate, for the magically successful software house was traditionally uncommunicative with both public and press. Later, *C&VG* editor Tim Metcalf even complained good-naturedly to Roger Kean about the secret CRASH pipeline to Ultimate affection.

Maps were the latest thing; Issue Five saw the inaugural edition of the Playing Tips. My desk was expanded and I began regurgitating the erudite scribblings of readers who added helpful hints to their letters. Among those had been primitive *Atic Atac* maps, and one or two reasonable versions of *Jet Set Willy*'s terrifying mansion. The best, by Kenneth Kyle from Notts, was avidly poured over by Roger Kean (who got A level geography at school). He spent an entire weekend checking it out against the game, using a handy infinite lives cheat supplied by an embryonic hacker, and drawing up his own map which then appeared in the issue, thanking Kenneth for his inspiring version.

It started a trend; from this point on CRASH would have to have maps whenever possible, and before long every other computer mag dealing with games would follow suit. Otherwise the Playing Tips seem pretty tame now, along the, 'from levels 17-24 of *Chuckie Egg*, both the robot hens and the yellow hen are after you. This increases the excitement and makes it much harder' line. Thrilling.

This June issue was the real launch of Beyond, a powerful new software house put together by EMAP, publishers of *C&VG* and *Sinclair User*. Beyond's try-out game, *Space Station Zebra*, had proved a dud, but *Psytron* was a Smash, largely because of the complex, interlinked game elements and its use of crosshatched graphics. The technique wasn't exactly new, but this was the first time monochromatic line drawings had been used so extensively on a plain-coloured background, providing a tremendously detailed effect.

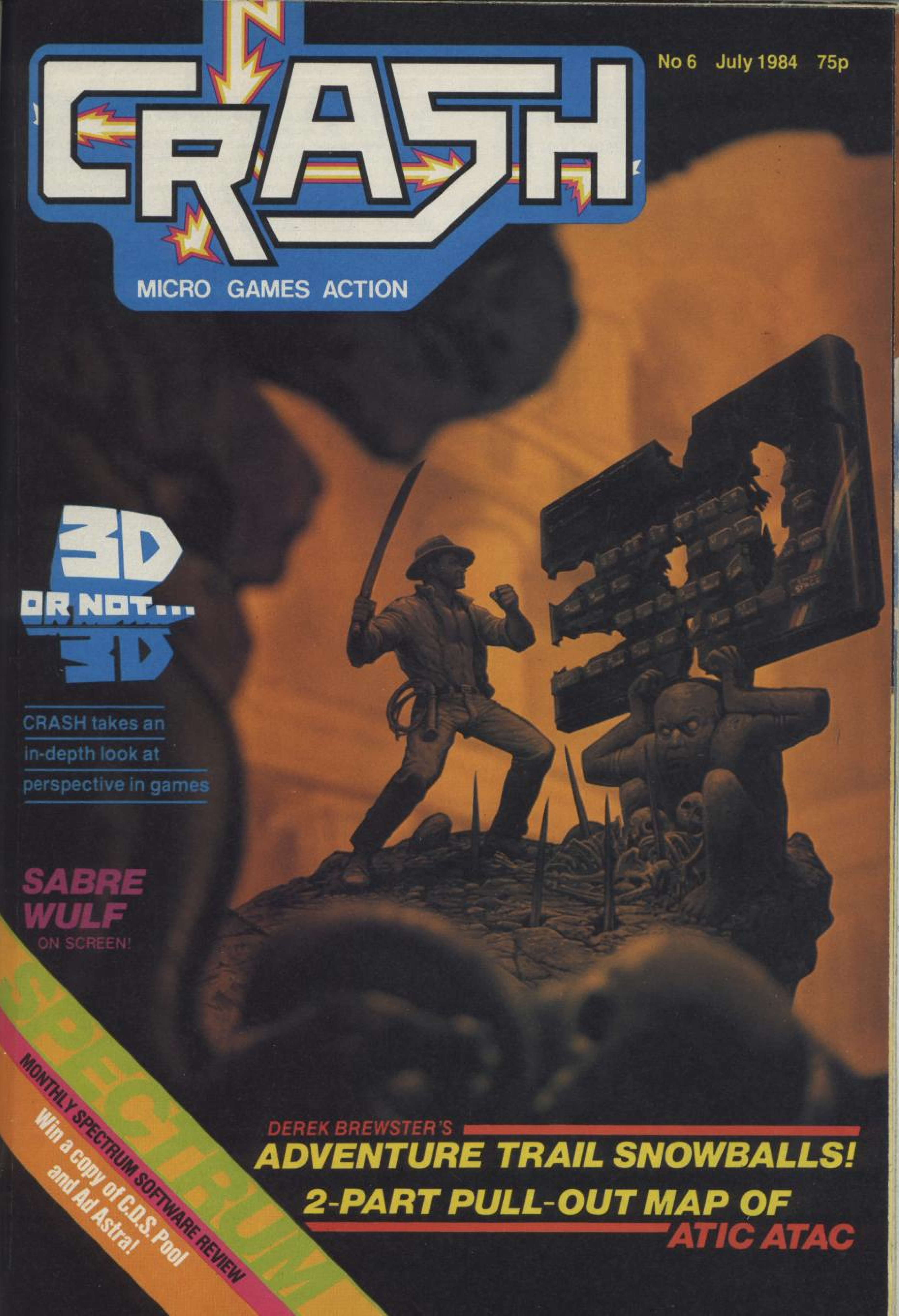
Meanwhile, Derek's new Adventure Trail had also found a Smash in Hewson's *Fantasia Diamond*. But at *Psytron*'s release, Beyond hinted that a revolutionary new adventure game, *Lords Of Midnight*, was almost ready . . .



CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

No 6 July 1984 75p



3D OR NOT... 3D

CRASH takes an in-depth look at perspective in games

SABRE WULF ON SCREEN!

SPECTRUM

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

Win a copy of C.D.S. Pool and Ad Astra!

DEREK BREWSTER'S

ADVENTURE TRAIL SNOWBALLS!

2-PART PULL-OUT MAP OF ATIC ATAC

July 1984
Issue No. 6

Released on June 28th

This cover is unique, for to date it is the only one that is actually a photograph, albeit one of Oliver's artwork. Relating to an article about 3-D games, the picture's theme was taken from the newly released film Raiders Of The Lost Ark. *'Indie' is seen threatening a statue bearing a Spectrum, ravaged to form the characters 3D. The foreground and background were also painted artwork, but when the three layers were set up one behind the other rather like a cardboard stage set, the soft focus created a three-dimensional effect.*

CRASH was rapidly expanding, both in scope and in the people who worked for it, at least on a casual basis. As Kean, Frey and Western fiddled around in the 'studio' (in reality Roger's bedroom) setting up the various bits and pieces for the cover shot and getting the lighting and focus just right, downstairs another mail-order-buying youngster tried his hand at writing a test review (of Rabbit's dreadful *Deathstar*, if my memory serves). He was 13-year-old Robin Candy, who, to his eternal embarrassment, appeared in a photograph sitting cross-legged on a Spectrum wearing a CRASH T-shirt as part of the Hotline spread.

Roger reckoned the test was satisfactory, and Robin joined the reviewing team along with Matthew Uffindell, Chris Passey and one or two other Ludlow locals.

Three other newcomers made their first appearance, Signpost in the Adventure Trail, Ultimate's enduring Lunar Jetman comic strip drawn by John Richardson, and at the end of the Playing Tips, my Hall Of Slime, which lasted up until recently when I thought it had finally had its day. Nearly every other magazine ran high-score tables for readers, usually called Hall Of Fame or Roll Of Honour. When asked to do the same in CRASH I thought it would be boring to repeat the formula, and since none of the scores printed elsewhere seemed to be checked out for truthfulness (and how can you all too often?), and the whole high-scoring ethos seemed reminiscent of 'creeping' at school, I opted for the Hall Of Slime – a special home for high-scoring creepie-crawlies. It worked a treat!

The centre spread saw our first ever colour map, part one of the *Atic Atac* plan, done with the help of competition entries. But the amazing feature of this issue was the mammoth article Roger prepared on 3-D games to date. 14 pages long, it examined the nature of 3-D perspective and then showed how each form had been implemented on the Spectrum through some 60 games. Once again, in many respects it was a 'first'; no other entertainment computer magazine had ever attempted such an exhaustive, or long, feature before. And it went against the traditionalist grain – publications aimed at a teenage market were supposed to present short, snappy articles in recognition of the short attention span of young people. It was an outmoded concept CRASH threw away, we all believed our readers capable of reading long, detailed and intelligent pieces (even when we were often forced to listen to some surprisingly fluent obscenities on the Hotline answering machine!).

Despite the onset of the summer months, software was holding up well. Five games were Smashed, the oddly-named *Worse Things Happen At Sea* from Silversoft, which was maddeningly addictive and funny, Bug Byte's *Antics*, the very playable high-scoring game *Moon Alert* from Ocean, an adventure Smash in Level 9's *Snowball* – first of the famous trilogy – and the dubiously-acclaimed *Sabre Wulf* from Ultimate. There's no doubt it should have been a Smash – it's just that it arrived so late in the month we hardly had time to play it enough, and copped out by not rating it at all!

Up until this moment, CRASH had been produced from a house, really from just two small rooms, but the company's finances had improved sufficiently to afford proper offices. As Issue Six came towards completion, Newsfield leased three floors of a building in Ludlow. We were all looking forward to being able to stretch out a bit, to be able to write and do the artwork in less cramped quarters.



No.7 August 1984 75p

CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION



FULL THROTTLE (MICROMEGA)
& RAPSCALLION (BUG-BYTE)
reviewed

SUMMER COMPETITION SPECIAL

8 ACE COMPETITIONS & 100s OF PRIZES!!

OVER £3,000 IN VALUE FROM:

Lothlorien ∗ Melbourne House
Micromega ∗ Poppy Soft ∗ R&R
Realtime ∗ Ultimate ∗ Crash

SPECTRUM
MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

ATIC ATAC MAP PART 2

August 1984
Issue No. 7

Released on July 26th

Right from the start Oliver had been illustrating CRASH with a mixture of action-packed comic-strip pictures and gentler, more humorous cartoons of variously-shaped alien beings. The latter became very popular with readers, who dubbed them 'Oli bugs'. They can still be seen at the top of the editorial page today. To mark the holiday season, Oliver gave dynamic game themes a rest – and the bugs a cover. A typical CRASH reader relaxes with friends on the sands of some far off planet, complete with all the luggage he needs – a monitor, joystick and his Spectrum.

During July, as the August issue was being written, Newsfield moved into its new premises in King Street – in spirit if not in fact. Hold ups over the lease meant that we were still crammed like sprats in a pickling jar in Roger's house where we had started out.

Space wasn't the only concern, the need for more professional equipment to produce the magazine's black-and-white pictures had led to the procurement of a large, computer-operated process camera. It was important to have it, and it had been thought that there would be space to put it. The machine arrived in July with no home, but the directors took the risk of installing it in the new offices hoping that the lease problems would be sorted out quickly. Fortunately they were, although not in time for this edition. The camera went on the third floor and weighed a ton; it would have been awful to have had to carry it all the way down again!

Out in the wide world, a terrible event had taken place: the great British software hope, Imagine, had collapsed owing fortunes, including several thousand pounds of advertising revenue to CRASH. At the time, it seemed to be the most visible tip of an iceberg of financial strains for the software industry, and directly led to the notion of the summer software slump, a concept that's stayed with us ever since.

And yet this issue provided some excellent games. The three arcade Smashes were from Micro-something-or-others. There was Micromega's marvellous bike road-racer, *Full Throttle*, Micromania's *Kosmic Kanga* and Mikro-Gen's *Automania*. Of the last, the review kicked off saying 'Meet a new hero . . . Wally Week is destined for big things . . . ' It wasn't a psychic prediction but a reference to the pay rise he hoped to get from working hard in a car factory. Now, it's a matter of history that Mr Week was indeed destined to become very big. The other biggie was Beyond's *Lords Of Midnight*, which had finally arrived and sent Derek into paroxysms of delight. It set 'new high standards in Spectrum software,' he declared.

Among those that just missed being a Smash were Ocean's *Cavelon*, another Panayi 3-D game from Vortex, *TLL* and *3-D Tank Duel*, this last from a new software house called Realtime, now developers of many Spectrum games for large companies. One of the three programmers, Andrew Onions, was originally from Ludlow. His parents lived five doors away from Roger Kean (incidentally, the house is now rented by Richard Eddy and some others from Newsfield). Everyone loved *Tank Duel*, the best-ever implementation of that old arcade original, *Battlezone*. But we were also aware that the review could be called biased if the Ludlow connection became recognised, so Matthew Uffindell and Chris Passey were kept in the dark as to who Andrew Onions was!

Advertising was becoming increasingly more professional, better images, better designs and more impact. Along with the improvement, however, came an additional helping of hype – classier boasting doesn't necessarily mean a classier product. The more pre-release exposure a game received, the harder it could fall – companies too. One such game, well advertised and eagerly awaited, was also one of the earliest 'big' licences, CRL's *War Of The Worlds*. Based on HG Wells's famous novel and with a helping hand from Jeff Wayne's equally famous music, the game proved only too well that a good idea and loads of hype aren't set for success unless there's also good game design and a decent program in there somewhere. Soon enough, the established companies would be able to employ the talents of individuals and teams, but in 1984 the best of those people were struggling to make their names as independent outfits, like Realtime.



CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

No.8 SEPTEMBER 1984

85p

AN ISSUE OF EXCLUSIVES!

STAGECOACH & BLACKHAWK
CREATIVE SPARKS

THE LEGEND OF AVALON
HEWSON CONSULTANTS

DARK STAR
DESIGN DESIGN

TIR NA NOG
GARGOYLE GAMES



SPECTRUM
MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW
PRIZES GALORE IN OUR COMPETITIONS!!

How Crystal became Design Design

Lothlorien- Keyboard Warlords

The Virgin Sorceror

September 1984
Issue No 8

Released on
August 30th

Again we have a summery cover to suit the season, and one that isn't related to any game. This is a splendid example of the Spectrum device being used in a surreal manner to create effect. The distributor voiced a worry that readers wouldn't be able to tell from the painting that it was a computer magazine. But one glimpse of that P-quotes-PRINT key was like a neon sign to any rubber-keyed Spectrum owner – and they were all rubber keys then. In order not to distract from the picture, the cover lines were kept, for CRASH, to a modest minimum.

The King Street offices are situated on three floors above a Victoria Wine shop in the very centre of Ludlow. In August, when CRASH moved in, only the top two floors were used, and they looked empty enough when we were all installed! The first floor was occupied by a subtenant who astonishingly enough was also in the computer business, a programmer of educational software.

Reception, mail order, subscriptions and administration went on the second floor, run by Franco Frey and Denise Roberts. Denise had joined Newsfield only a month or two after Matthew, to take over his mail order responsibilities when he was moved across to do CRASH reviews back in December 83.

Of the four rooms on the top floor, one became an art room for layout and one a writing room with two desks and typewriters, one held the process camera, and the other was used for photographing screens and as a photographic darkroom. It was great luxury to have all that breathing room, and at last a proper set up existed for receiving visits from software houses. Our first two such were notable. Graham Stafford and Simon Brattel of Crystal Computing came to tell the world that they were henceforth to be known as Design Design, and to give the reviewers a preview of *Dark Star*, just about the fastest 3-D vector graphics game ever written. And Gargoyle Games, in the form of Greg Follis, Ted Heathcote and Roy Carter, nipped over from Dudley to show us a game in a revolutionary new style for which Gargoyle was to become celebrated. It was *Tir Na Nòg*.

We were doing well for previews, for a day later Andrew Hewson appeared bearing gifts in the form of Steve Turner's latest game, *The Legend Of Avalon*. This graphical adventure marked a distinct change of pace and 3-D style for Steve, and even in an unfinished form it looked very exciting. These early previews made CRASH's manifesto of being first with new games, new software houses and innovations a reality. The 'exclusives' war was beginning to hot up, but we felt well satisfied with August!

When not hard at work looking after the business end of CRASH or reviewing utilities, Franco Frey wore his other hat as an engineer. For some months he'd been developing a hardware programmable interface for the Spectrum, and suddenly it was ready to market. We had tried out several prototypes in the office, and they made setting up joysticks much easier. It was the Frel Comcon, which was to become a huge success. Our preview was a rather easy scoop to make!

Hot games were more in the news than the reviews, although Creative Sparks's *Black Hawk* was Smashed for its addictivity (certainly not its graphics, whatever the ratings said), and of course there was the state-of-the-art sports simulation from Psion, *Match Point*. Derek provided the third: Adventure International's *The Hulk* with its pretty graphics.

Legend provided us with hype when they announced *The Great Space Race*. The campaign relied heavily on the reputation of their *Valhalla*, although many suggested that Legend was busily recreating an aura of success around the earlier game greater than it really deserved in order to justify claims for *The Great Space Race*. 'A spectacular futuristic romp . . . ' said our News page hopefully, but there was to be a five-month wait to find out whether or not the hype would justify the hope.




No.9 OCTOBER 1984
85p
CRASH
MICRO GAMES ACTION
ZIGGY RETURNS:
Backpacker's Guide to the Universe
NEW GAMES
Strangeloop
Kokotoni Wilf
Braxx Bluff
From Tin Soldiers to Computer Games
INSIDE GAMES WORKSHOP
SPECTRUM
MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW
PRIZES GALORE IN OUR COMPETITIONS!!

October 1984
Issue No. 9

Released on
September 27th

Oliver's Ziggy cover was among the most popular he produced. It was really the first CRASH cover definitely promoting a specific game, Fantasy's Backpacker's Guide To The Universe. *Here was an opportunity to use his imagination to bring to life objects, characters and weird aliens involved in a game that no-one had yet seen, all from written details offered in the prerelease description. The result is a powerful picture which, ironically, probably informed more readers of what hero Ziggy was like than anything Fantasy themselves put out.*

By its ninth edition, the effect CRASH was beginning to have on the software industry was, in turn, being reapplied to its staff. Roger Kean had already been horrified a couple of months earlier at Micromania's concern when they were informed by the most powerful software distributor of the time that unless a game achieved better than 65% in CRASH it wouldn't be accepted for distribution. Now, proof sheets of CRASH reviews were being requested by retail chains to see whether a game was worthy of shelf space.

It put pressure on the reviewing team – Matthew, Chris Passey and Robin Candy – because software houses wanted to present unfinished games to discover what the reviewers would like to see improved, so that the game had a chance of becoming a CRASH Smash. Some may have considered that a visit with the personal touch would influence the team by putting it on the spot when it came to making an impartial judgement. If so, as many were to be disappointed by Matthew's outspoken opinions and Robin's downright stubbornness. Now another young reviewer had appeared (and undergone the ritual photograph pushing CRASH T-shirts on the Hotline page). He was Ben Stone, from nearby Tenbury, and he was as daunting in his opinions as the others, despite his newcomer status.

The Ziggy cover did little to help. That kind of coverage was eagerly sought by companies desperate to convince shops that their game was about to sell in its tens of thousands, and since it seemed that Fantasy got a cover with apparently no trouble, Roger found himself inundated with calls suggesting ideas that would have kept CRASH in covers until the 1990s! As a consequence, for the remainder of the year Oliver avoided game-linked cover paintings.

One of the questing visitors was Angus Ryall of Games Workshop, but he stayed longer than most, becoming our strategy columnist for the new Frontline. Another was Steve Wilcox of newly-formed Elite, who brought with him the oddly-named *Kokotoni Wilf*. Over several days both Matthew and Robin debated with Elite's programmers on minor improvements before pronouncing themselves satisfied, but Steve may have been disappointed that *Kokotoni Wilf* still missed being a Smash.

In fact Smashes were a bit thin – the pre-Christmas period was looming and software houses were holding back, apart from Gremlin Graphics. They'd scored quite a coup with TV news coverage of their 'mining' game which caricatured Arthur Scargill, then very much in the news because of the national miners' strike. *Wanted: Monty Mole* was a surefire Smash, capturing all the addictivity of *Jet Set Willy* and offering loads of new puzzling problems to solve.

Within days we achieved a cheat mode for *Monty Mole* and began preparing the map for a future issue. It was a typical late-afternoon situation: Ben (school over for the day) playing the game to reach every screen one by one, Roger sitting sketchpad in hand roughing out the screens for Oliver to fill in the detail later, Matthew in another corner alternating between reviewing and making halftone pictures for David Western in the layout room, Robin sorting through mail ready for me to start the Forum. The jokes about Robin taking over my desk were no jokes!

If this paints a suspiciously cosy picture of contentment and smacks of nostalgia for its own sake, don't be fooled – it was hard work for the small team. Within a few short months a massive expansion was about to take place and the coming changes would sunder the simpler comforts we then enjoyed.

The first indication of change was the arrival of a black Apricot xi computer. For Roger Kean, at least, the days of typewriters, paper and Tipp-Ex were over.



No.10 NOVEMBER 1984

85p

CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

THE PIRACY DOSSIER

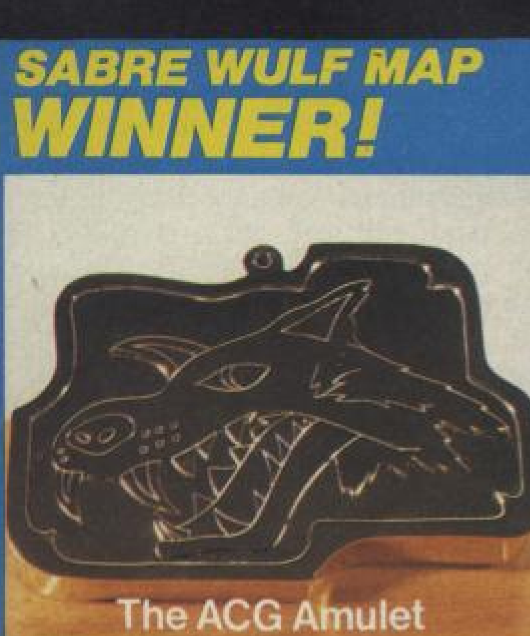
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SPECTRUM

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

BATTLEFIELD JOYSTICK

We test 19 popular Joysticks to see if they stand the Decathlon pace!!

November 1984
Issue No. 10

Released on October 25th

'Sometimes cover ideas arrived without trouble, but there were always issues when nothing suggested itself. Normally Oliver prefers to work one-and-a-half times up on finished size to allow for crisper detail, but when he's running late the repro house would rather have the painting same size. This cover was the first done at printed size because the decision to go with the joystick-comparison article was made at the last moment. In some ways it's my personal favourite – you could cut the atmosphere with a knife – and yet it was done in three hours flat!

I can remember Roger and Oliver being rather proud of having raised as much as £4,000 in prizes, possibly because it indicated how far CRASH had come from that first issue when *C&VG* regarded us as a local fanzine with potential. Now, without a lot of effort, we had software houses eager to participate in competitions and put up real money in value. Once again, the DIY section was the biggest in the contents, ten competitions.

And talking of the contents page . . . another development was taking place, almost without anyone noticing it. The page's basic shape had remained the same for a while, using rainbow colours when we had time to put them in. Originally this complicated procedure was undertaken by our repro house in London, but after CRASH moved into its new offices, a film-processing machine was purchased to shoot finished artwork to negatives for the printer, thus cutting overhead costs considerably. Matthew and Roger, who looked after the technical end of layout as well as writing reviews and articles, began to experiment with preparing colour for the printer. For several months to come, they were to do the contents page in-house, which explains why it was more or less ambitious, depending on how much time they had.

From this small beginning Newsfield began to do more film planning, adding colour to many pages that otherwise would have been monochrome. Today the process requires an entire department of its own, managed by Matthew Uffindell.

The big feature was a comparison of joysticks, which was pretty exhaustive – and exhausting. The team were thrashing the damned things for weeks, using Ocean's *Daley Thompson's Decathlon* as the wrecking game. And that came on top of several tiring days at The *PCW* Show, held at Olympia. CRASH didn't have a stand because of the cost, but Roger, Oliver and Matthew waded round talking to as many exhibitors as they could. Wearing specially-made CRASH badges, they were frequently stopped by visitors who wanted to meet anyone from the magazine.

As usual the show prompted massive releases of games and there were seven Smashes. *Pyjamarama* was the second Wally Week game from Mikro-Gen, a massive leap forward with its arcade and adventure combination. *Delta Wing* (Creative Sparks) was a sort of forerunner of *Mercenary*. There was Hewson's *Legend Of Avalon*, the complex helicopter simulation from Durell called *Combat Lynx*, and two games from our own Derek Brewster, the arcade *Jasper* and the enduring adventure *Kentilla*. *Jasper* just made it by a spot, but the tragedy is that although Derek had it ready before *Jet Set Willy*, contractual complications delayed its release; had it been released then, it would have been a real eye-opener, but advances in software were being made fast and it was almost out of date.

There was one other Smash, *Booty*, our first budget hit from newly-created Firebird.

This was our first issue composed on a computer. Learning to use a word processor and then all the complications involved with getting the typesetting back for layout meant it was quite fraught at times, and for most things I still preferred my typewriter. However, the length of POKE routines was increasing, and dealing with them was never my strongest point, so I was secretly pleased to discover Robin Candy entering them happily for me on the Apricot when Roger wasn't around. It was the thin end of the wedge of course – discontented with providing review comments and sorting mail, Robin wanted to get do 'some serious' writing, and for me, the writing was on the wall as far as Playing Tips was concerned.



No.11 DECEMBER 1984
85p

CRASH

MICRO GAMES ACTION

Crash Smash

- **STARSTRIKE** REALTIME
- **TURMOIL** BUG-BYTE
- **SIR LANCELOT** MELBOURNE HOUSE
- **OUT OF THE SHADOWS** MIZAR
- **DARK STAR** DESIGN-DESIGN
- **TIR NA NOG** GARGOYLE
- **SKOOLDAZE** MICROSPHERE



SPECTRUM

MONTHLY SPECTRUM GAMES REVIEW

WIN A SPECTRUM+!

PRIZES GALORE IN OUR MANY COMPETITIONS!!

December 1984
Issue No. 11

Released on November 15th

There were moments when people glibly assumed Oliver Frey loathed Spectrums owing to the number he destroyed in CRASH cover illustrations, but the opposite was the truth. As he remarked when ZZAP! came along, the old Spectrum was one of the friendliest objects which simply lent itself to painting, unlike the brown Commodore 64 which merely resembled a piece of fudge. Here's another cover unrelated to any game, excepting perhaps Mizar's Out Of The Shadows, and one that was actually a reworking of an old mail order catalogue cover, featuring a hero bursting forth from a TV screen.

The promise Realtimé had shown in *3-D Tank Duel* was well and truly realised in their second release, *Starstrike*, which recreated all the thrills of the popular coin-op *Star Wars*. It was in a bit of a race with Design Design's *Dark Star*, a similar game in principle. But both Smashes showed how a closely related concept can be very differently implemented. In their own ways, they were state-of-the-art software.

Equally excellent and very different from either 'Star' game and from each other were the Smashes *Tir Na Nòg* and *Skool Daze*. Gargoyle Games gave us Cuchulainn, Sidhe and Greg Follis's Grego-Celtic mythology, giant animated characters, mental 3-D and a game hard to distinguish between pure adventure and arcade/explorer. Microsphere's characters were smaller, but beautifully animated against authentic school backgrounds, providing another sort of adventure game but with properly crude schoolboy humour as its theme. These two were also state-of-the-art. Bug-Byte's *Turmoil* and Melbourne's *Sir Lancelot* were not, but were still highly playable and addictive games of sufficient quality to make them stand out from the rest of the crowd.

Deep down in the Adventure Trail (or rather up in Newcastle-upon-Tyne where he lives) Derek was telling everyone who had packed away their Spectrums to get them out and fill the boxes with straw and tortoises, for 'when it comes to Spectrum software, you've never had it so good.' He was excited by Level 9's *Return To Eden*, Bug-Byte's Twin Kingdom Valley, Games Workshop's *Tower Of Despair* and the ebulliently, wickedly funny *Valkyrie 17* from the anarchic Ram Jam Corporation (through Palace Software).

To cap it off *Out Of The Shadows* from unknown Mizar was a Smash, and thereby hangs a tale – and a CRASH failure. If anyone at CRASH felt unhappy about the reliance distributors and retailers were putting on CRASH reviews for stocking, then they were probably equally happy at being able to employ this unasked for power on the behalf of new or very small software houses. Some were finding it harder to get a look in with the increasingly professional and hard-nosed market place. Our record in their favour had been encouraging. But with Mizar, we drew a blank. No distributor would accept the game, having failed to spot its marketability, despite its CRASH Smash status. It was galling. And it showed more clearly than ever that the world was changing with blinding speed. At the beginning of 1984, an advertisement helped sales, by the end of the year even a full-scale marketing campaign was capable of failing to attract the distributors' attention. For the small independent software house, it looked like the beginning of the end.

Up until this time much of CRASH editorial was written without travelling the country visiting software houses, most being done over the phone. More recently we had been happy to see how many people would actually trek up to Ludlow to visit us, a mark indeed of acceptance. But two pleasant occasions forced first Roger and Oliver to visit London, and then Matthew and Roger. The first was a trip to see a preview of the film *The Last Starfighter* (about which Roger wrote an article on its use of computer graphics), and the second was to see a preview of *Ghostbusters*, set to be the first real big film tie-in. But for the game from conquering American company Activision we had to wait . . .



CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

No.12 1984/85

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Runes of Zendos DORCAS

PREVIEW: ***Airwolf*** ELITE's follow up to THE FALL GUY and DUKES OF HAZZARD

SPECTRUM

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

FREE GIANT CALENDAR 1985!

Christmas 1984
Issue No. 12

Released on December 13th

Well, what do you do for a Christmassy cover illustration? It isn't a time for taut statements on the nature of violent life and sudden death. The painting was intended as a strong contrast to the first cover, which set the tone for CRASH, and Oliver opted for a gentle picture depicting Santa handing out Spectrums to the deprived natives of a distant planet. He employed a technique which he uses occasionally, that of spraying the background colours over lightly drawn figures, then picking them out gently in colours which blend with the background.

The Christmas Special was going to be a nightmare, everyone knew it. Only two-and-a-half weeks to write and produce it due to the schedule being compressed, and it was intended to have 196 pages, bigger than anything we had tackled before.

On top of that, the first floor of King Street had become vacant with the educational software company moving on, and it was felt sensible to move editorial down there, giving art more room upstairs. The evidence is there to see in the issue, because Roger put together a feature about how CRASH happens, and there's a photograph of himself sitting at an L-shaped desk with Matthew, ostensibly reviewing a game. How empty and tidy the place looks compared to now! This move further delayed the writing however.

And what were we looking at? The original plan had been to do an issue full of competitions, special features and few reviews, on the grounds that everyone would already have released everything for Christmas. It didn't work out that way of course, for so many software houses were late, and there were still over 30 games in. Among them was the double bill from Ultimate, *Underwurlde* and *Knight Lore*, which continued the Sabreman saga started in *Sabre Wulf* and at the same time undid everyone's hopes that the Midland company would return to a sensible price level from the earlier game's, then outrageous, £9.95. Still, there was no doubting their quality, and they were Smashes. The better of the two, *Knight Lore*, was to initiate an entire genre, the isometric perspective 3-D exploring game.

Derek's Smash was for *The Runes Of Zendos* from Dorcas (formerly Doric). It was their second game, but despite its Smash, here again was an adventure game that failed to find the market it deserved. A different tune entirely for *Boulder Dash* and its hero Rockford, who would soon be adopted as a mascot by Newsfield's second title, ZZAP! 64. If its graphics weren't outstanding, that hardly mattered. This a was a maddeningly addictive mind-game and its strength lay in the idea more than in its appearance.

After all the interest, Fantasy's *Backpackers Guide To The Universe* was a little disappointing, though a genuinely unusual game. Somehow the market generally thought so too, because after good starting sâles, it slumped, eventually taking Fantasy with it.

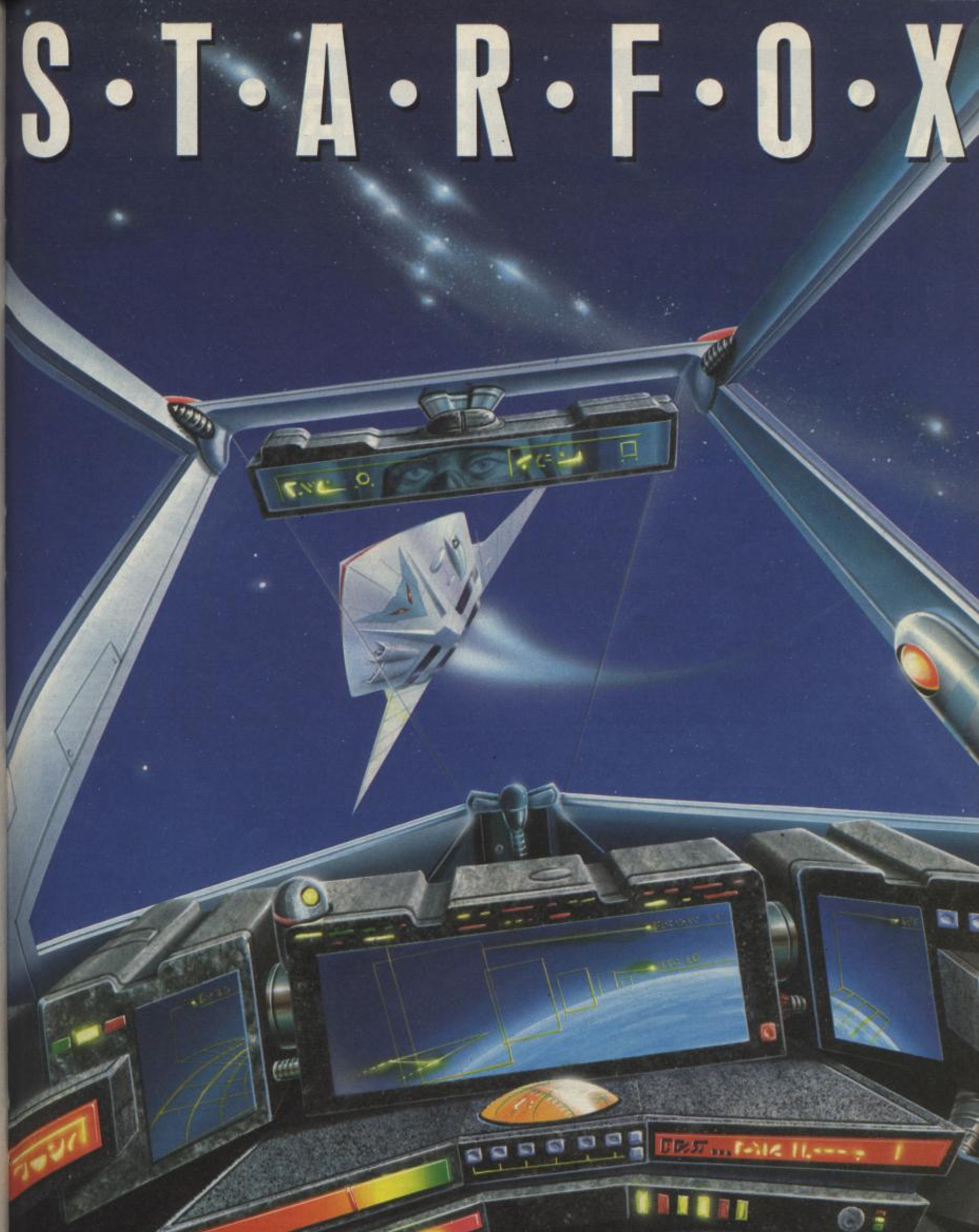
Ghostbusters was still under wraps, so it fell to Elite to come up with a major TV tie-in, *The Fall Guy*. However the game was hardly major although I recall it having some good points. Perhaps more effort went into setting up the licence deal than into the design and programming, a feeling which would persist for a long time when it came to big licences. Elite were going for TV tie-ins in a big way, and the issue also carried a preview of their next intended game, *Airwolf*, and mentioned its follow up, *Dukes Of Hazzard*. *Airwolf* was unwittingly to do CRASH a big favour, but more of that in the appropriate month.

I still retained my Playing Tips, but only by a hair's breadth as Robin Candy waded in with three pages of POKEs specially compiled for Christmas. It was to be my last month on the Tips for many a moon, Robin would take over in the New Year.

As my first job for Issue One had been to write the Look Back, it seemed only fitting that it was also my last task for Issue 12 – to complete the first year of CRASH.



The CRASH History continues next month with Issues 13 to 24



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PLENTY OF NETTIN'

PAUL EVANS plugs into Micronet with a new CRASH column

RAIN, RAIN, RAIN. I'm sure you know the feeling: it's pouring down and there's no chance of going out. *The Adventures Of A Lesser Spotted Alfgarnen Buttermoth* is on the telly.

It's at times like this you think 'at least I've got my Speccy to play megadestruction on!' – but that's not as good as someone to chat with.

It's at times like this *I* think 'at least I've got my modem'.

A modem is a gadget that connects your computer to the telephone line and allows it to talk to the computer at the other end. If you have a modem you can talk to any computer, however large, if you're using a standard method.

You can access large computers which hold thousands of pages of information, news, reviews, anything; I'm going to concentrate on just one of these massive networks, Prestel.

LOGGING ON

One of the cheapest and best-supported modems is available for the Spectrum – the VTX 5000. You can pick one up for about £35-£40.

The important software is on ROM inside the VTX, and it pages in as soon as you turn the computer on. (Beware – the VTX isn't compatible with the black 128 or the +3, though there are ways around this problem, revealed this month.)

If you get the welcome screen, you're ready to log on to Prestel – that is, if you've got a password. A subscription to Prestel and Micronet, the computing area, costs around £60 a year. It's a lot, but worth it. And if you pay for one year, you get a free VTX!

MORE PAGES THAN CRASH!

Through Prestel you can book tickets instantly, see the latest prices within seconds of change, check timetables and so on. And it covers every subject you can think of.

Prestel (or Pretzel, as some 'netters call it) is a database containing about half a million pages of information. A Prestel page is the same as a page on Ceefax or Oracle and that's what's displayed on your screen. However, Prestel is a lot faster than the other networks.

The network is made up of IPs (Information Providers) who create their own pages and allow the public to look at them. IPs on Prestel range from British Airways to the stock market.

Micronet is one of the IPs on Prestel. It serves the microcomputing public – you and me – with 'microbases' for most home computers, a large range of telesoftware from major software houses, games with cash prizes, PBMs, a gallery for people wanting their own pages on Micronet, several helplines, news, reviews, tips, chatlines where you can have actual conversations with real people across the country, the adventures *Shades* and *MUD*, and lots more.

The Spectrum is one of the best-supported computers on Micronet. There are four main sections for the Speccy, and many small ones run on the gallery.

SPECTRUM SPECIALS

The Spectrum Micronet base, called Spectrum, has a a massive database containing tips, news, telesoftware, a helpline, reviews of hardware, books and software, features and three weekly letters updates. The letters are the most popular thing on Micronet – anything can be answered within a week!

The Micronet Contributors run clubs on Micronet, and two Spectrum areas are run in their database. The first is Spec-tacular (not to be confused with the fanzine). It's similar to Spectrum, but has different sections like an 'artshow' and routes to gallery areas.

The Spectrum User To User Group (SUTUG) is a list of Spectrum users on Micronet and their mailbox numbers, so you can send messages to them. It only covers people who've asked to be listed, but it's BIG!

And Specs, which opened earlier this year, is colourful and well-designed, with many areas other sections have missed out such as ads and fanzine reviews.

In CRASH I'll be taking a closer look at the Spectrum areas as well as *Shades*, the PBM game *Starnet* and many other aspects of Prestel and Micronet. My mailbox number is 219995412, and I'll send replies to your messages every weekend.



► **Micronet: an alternative to megadestruction . . .**

FAX FOR THE MEMORY

VIEWFAX, one of the Prestel IPs, recently closed down. But some of its pages can still be accessed, because they haven't been erased – have a look at page *258258#. (For those who don't have a modem, I'll reveal its contents next time!)

TELEGAMES

MANY major software companies are selling their games as telesoftware on Micronet; Elite has just joined Hewson and Firebird on the network.

Most telesoftware costs less than you'd pay in the shops, and you don't have to trudge out to buy it. Hewson is already selling *Zynaps* at a low price, and Elite offers *Paperboy* and *Space Harrier* for just under £7 each.

FIREFLY BURNS OUT

FIREFLY has been withdrawn. It was a way of creating a mini-Prestel (known as a bulletin board or BB) on your Spectrum with a Beta disk system and a Voyager 7 modem.

Firefly was a good piece of software, but it was ridden with bugs and wasn't being updated. This looks like the end of standard BBs on the Spectrum – only *Micron* is left, and you need special software to access a *Micron* BB.

FALLING OFF A LOG-ON SCREEN

THE recently-updated Prestel log-on/log-off screen is SO DULL!

And the new computer tones are causing trouble. You can now log onto this with a modem running at a different speed from the VTX. That's OK, but now my modem crashes every time I log off.

If anyone has had similar trouble, please contact my mailbox . . .

128 SOLUTIONS

THERE ARE TRICKS to make the original black 128 work with the VTX modem.

Just fit a +2 ROM in place of the 128 ROM (the +2 works fine with the VTX). CPC supplies these ROMs for around £8; ring (0772) 555034.

Or you can buy the £22 Spectre Comms ROM, which goes in place of the original VTX ROM; it contains new comms software which knocks the VTX software for six. But be warned: fitting this ROM will invalidate British Telecom's VTX approval.



DEREK BREWSTER'S Adventure Trail

THE LABOURS OF HERCULES

PRODUCER: Terry Taylor
PRICE: £1.99

This *Quill*ed adventure offers much more than a cursory glance might suggest. The theme chosen is one I much enjoy – ancient Greece – which I think suits the medium of adventure very well (though some unfortunates may well recall curiously inappropriate Latin lessons which have irrevocably tarnished these wondrous Greek stories).

Another plus for reviewers like myself is the superb information pack received with the game – a lesson for all budding software producers, who sometimes overlook the importance of clear instructions and information in developing product identity.

Your Herculean task in this one is to guide Hercules through a series of tasks (12 in all) asked of him by Eurystheus to assuage the strong man's guilt over cutting up his own family. Hercules's behaviour which is, of course, completely out of character, is explained away by his good friend, Theseus, who reminds him of Hera's curse upon him. By going to the oracle our hero finds his way of gaining grace: he takes on the 12 tasks which by and large must be completed in the order set by Eurystheus.

Your journey will throw you into the fascinating world of Greek mythology. You will encounter the fearsome Hydra, the Minotaur, Cerberus the terrible guardian of the underworld, and other characters from the realms of legend. Explore ancient Greece, cross wide plains, negotiate dangerous mountains and treacherous swamps, and sail the vast ocean to distant lands and islands . . . sounds like a holiday brochure from the days before Club 18-30.

Though it's a *Quill*ed text-only affair, *The Labours Of Hercules* is a very engaging piece of software, and it has chosen some superb legends from which to create its problems. The location descriptions are often quite evocative, as in the case of the Royal Throne Room: 'This room surpasses anything that Hercules has ever seen. The walls are adorned with magnificent frescoes depicting all manner of exotic flowers, birds and animals. The floor is a huge mosaic, and tells of the battle of the Titans. At the head of the room is a huge marble throne, and seated on that throne is the regal figure of Eurystheus.' It is from this location that the tasks are meted out.

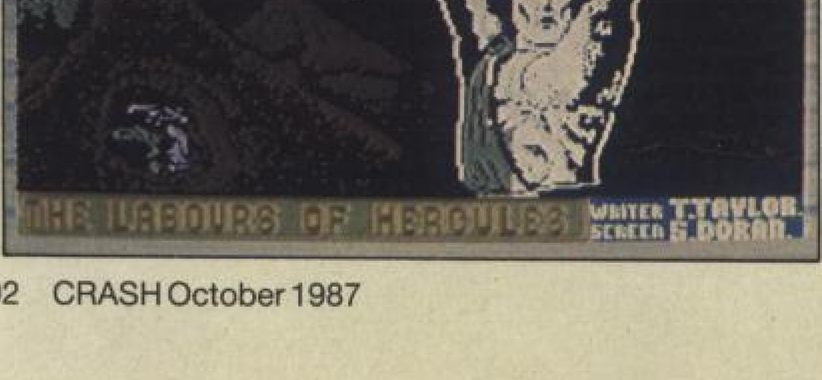
The EXAMINE reports are contrastingly short, but the important thing is that just about everything can be examined, whether central to the plot or not.

A good theme with good problems – what more does an adventure need? *The Labours Of Hercules* is available by mail order only from Terry Taylor at *20 Lee Road, Bacup, Lancashire OL13 OEA.*

DIFFICULTY: made easier by referring to the Greek myths
GRAPHICS: none
PRESENTATION: redesigned character set
INPUT FACILITY: verb/noun
RESPONSE: fast *Quill*
GENERAL RATING: interesting theme and plot

Atmosphere	74%
Vocabulary	73%
Logic	71%
Addictive quality	75%
Overall	73%

► **The mythology of ancient Greece and the technology of today make for an evocative challenge in *The Labours Of Hercules*. (It's text-only; this is the loading screen.)**



THE GUEST

PRODUCER: Stephen Wadsworth

The John Peel slot here – no-one has quite picked up on this game as yet, so presumably many software houses who've received it might well look here to see what I thought of it. *The Guest* is a very competent game and this is in no small way due to its very safe background – ie *The Quill*, *Illustrator* and *Patch*: most of the game was in fact written before their successor, *PAW*, became available. However, there is a niggle even if its source is fully explained by the author himself: due to the use of airbrush and inverse airbrush effects, which give the pictures above the text more texture, the graphics appear slowly and this proves irritating when trying to move the pace on a little over familiar ground. Apart from this qualification, much is as you'd expect – the coherent plot and setting taking their inspiration from the ghoul-ridden and vampire-infested works of Bram Stoker and Stephen King.

The adventure seems very long and is set over two parts, the second being the more difficult. At the start of Part Two you type in a set of codes which must correspond to some useful items from Part One. Because I fluffed one of the entries, I had to make do without my fragment, an important item from the first episode.

The notes accompanying my review game were truly marvellous and included maps and some rather interesting plans of Riverpoint Castle overlooking the Fief Of Riverpoint.

These lands are owned by the Bistrize family, headed by a Count and Countess. The Count has fallen ill with an inexplicable malady and the Countess turns to you, The Guest, her personal champion and servant fighter, to sort things out.





▶ **It's a case of *Quill*ed until undead as you search for the Nosferatu, hidden in the shadowy world of *The Guest***



Things are pretty bad when you arrive. The villagers have shut themselves in the village hall to avoid their brethren who have joined the undead roaming the area: at the start of the adventure, their strength is almost exhausted and their morale low as no-one has seen the Priest Canen for three days. No doubt you, the hero, can turn things around with a nice pot of strong tea.

The other character in this adventure is Hara, the Wise Woman or Grey Sorceress – 'grey' because her magic is not fully white and not potent enough to vanquish the Nosferatu, the magical demon behind all the queer goings-on.

Hara is a useful first stop on your investigative trail: it is she who puts forward the theory that the Nosferatu is behind the count's sudden fall from good health and his journey into the twilight world of the undead.

To complete the adventure your thankless task is to rid the village of all these ghostly undead beings floating around, penetrate the castle's defences, destroy the Nosferatu, and round off the lot with a mystery bonus mission.

Playing the game you immediately become aware of the slow graphics, but the redesigned character set is atmospheric, if a little difficult to read. Particularly difficult are the runes that represent your input: these are so hard to decipher that you are never quite sure if you have made a typing error.

The location descriptions aren't the most interesting I've ever read and where they do tend to wax lyrical you'll normally find them repeated often, along with the lines 'you can hear the birds singing' or 'the east sky is lit with the orange dawn light of the sun'. You're often told about the position and quality of the light, which I suppose adds some flavour to the game.

The Guest is rather a good *Quill*ed game. It has very little in the way of earthshatteringly original features but, as with all games written on utilities, it shows a certain competence. The slow pictures are the exception: only one seems to have warranted all the effort expended in the airbrush technique which is responsible for the delays. In conclusion: a good theme and good playability, but the programming is perhaps just a little boring.

DIFFICULTY: Part One reasonably easy, Part Two much tougher
GRAPHICS: stipple effect, average
PRESENTATION: decidedly average
INPUT FACILITY: verb/noun
RESPONSE: *Quill*, but graphics slow
GENERAL RATING: competent, but perhaps a trifle dull

Atmosphere	**65%**
Vocabulary	**67%**
Logic	**69%**
Addictive qualities	**68%**
Overall	**67%**

DARGONSCRYPT

PRODUCER: Venom Games
PRICE: £1.00
AUTHOR: Mark Lane

Earth is in near-total darkness. The reason? Repsilak, Prince of the Shadowdwarves and lord of all Shroudworlde, has invaded the upper lands from his domain deep beneath the ground. His objective is to claim the upper lands as part of his kingdom, for then he would be the supreme leader of all Dargonscrypt, a large separate continent.

With the arrival of Repsilak and his power of black magic, all goodness starts to fade from the land. Now the final object in the whole of the continent is starting to succumb to the prince's black magic: the sun, the very source of light and life itself. When the sun finally does become exhausted it will go out forever; the land will be in total darkness and Repsilak will be triumphant.

However, there is an alternative: if the elixir of light and power can be concocted then the sun will absorb the magic given off by the potion and regain its strength. Repsilak will be defeated. Can you discover the secret of the elixir? If so, then you will be able to rid the land of Repsilak and peace will return once more.

So goes the blurb with this one, and I can't really make up my mind whether it's just soft in the head or rather clever. The game itself does appear just a bit soft: two-thirds of the screen area is devoted to the title and the name of the software house is permanently displayed with a simple and very small picture over on the far right. Needless to say, none of the pictures would win any awards, though at least they're drawn quickly! The text is unrefined Spectrum lower case, while the scrolling text at the bottom moves in such a manner as to leave the end of the last location description topping the new one.

But despite the presentation, the game as an adventure plays rather well – the layout is well-balanced and easily mapped. Items are carefully scattered about, usually one to every other location or so, and after about 20 locations, associations, whether justified or not, begin to form.

The objects of the first area (bounded by a pile of rubble, a deathly door and a waterfall) include a parrot cage, a trowel, a quill, a silver stick covered in small thorns, a crucifix (doesn't every adventure have one of these?), chalk, a plant, and a water canteen. Put these last two together and you see the plant suddenly put on some growth and produce a seed. You immediately ask yourself if this could be linked to the trowel . . .

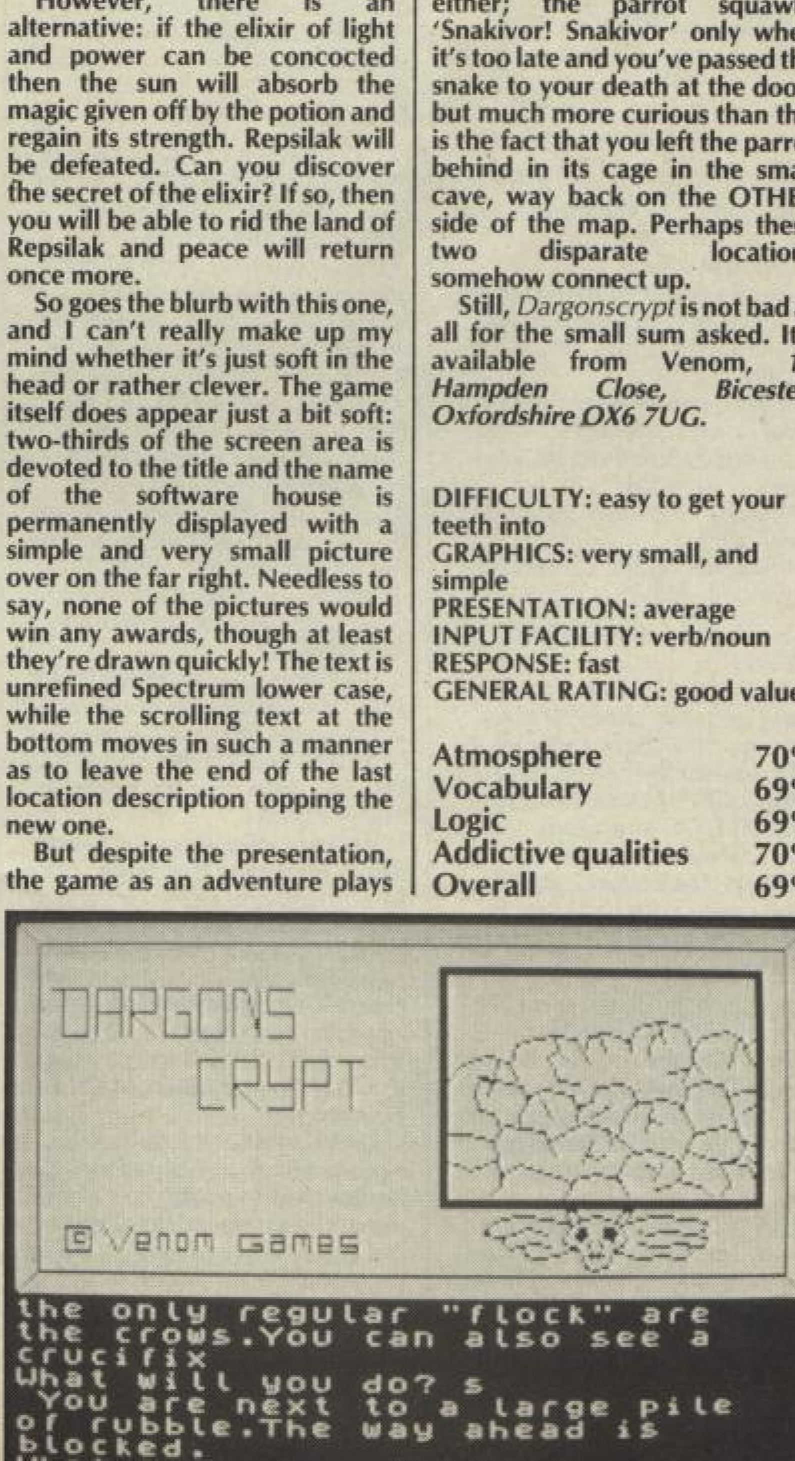
How you find the water canteen is a little strange – on your first visit to the sand caverns you suspect nothing but, when you pass by again, without any prompting whatsoever up comes 'You dig in the soft sand. You can also see a canteen of water.'!

The happenings at the deathly door aren't too convincing either; the parrot squawks 'Snakivor! Snakivor' only when it's too late and you've passed the snake to your death at the door: but much more curious than this is the fact that you left the parrot behind in its cage in the small cave, way back on the OTHER side of the map. Perhaps these two disparate locations somehow connect up.

Still, *Dargonscrypt* is not bad at all for the small sum asked. It's available from Venom, *11 Hampden Close, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX6 7UG.*

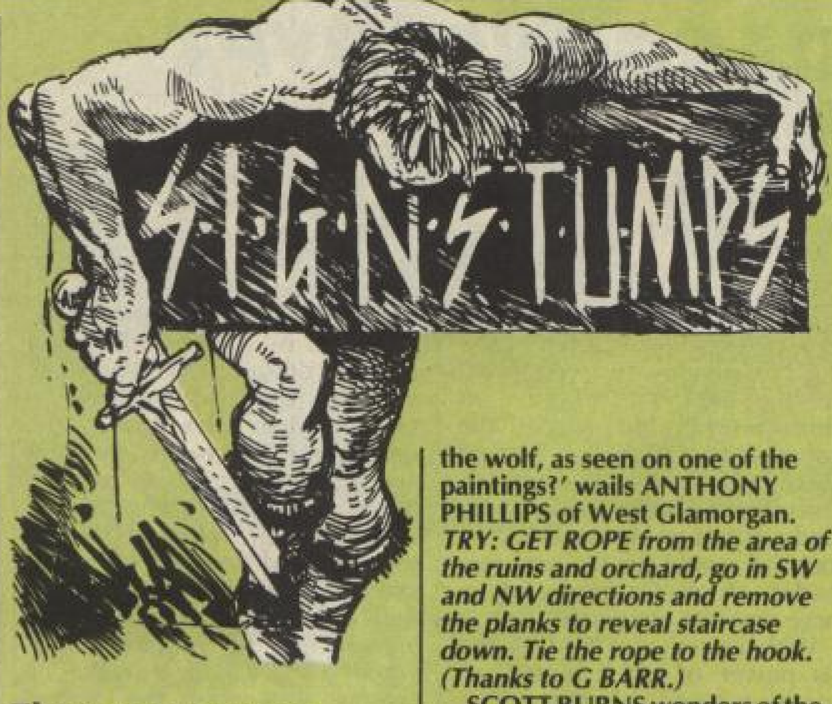
DIFFICULTY: easy to get your teeth into
GRAPHICS: very small, and simple
PRESENTATION: average
INPUT FACILITY: verb/noun
RESPONSE: fast
GENERAL RATING: good value

Atmosphere	**70%**
Vocabulary	**69%**
Logic	**69%**
Addictive qualities	**70%**
Overall	**69%**



▶





There was a super mailbag for this month, with some good, detailed questions I can get my teeth into. Let's kick off with a recent release, *Legend Of Apache Gold*.

LEGEND OF APACHE GOLD

ANDREW JONES of Leicester is left hopping mad like some Indian round a campfire by the following puzzles:

1 How do you get into the mine? I get stopped by the dancing Indian who comes out of the skull.
2 How do you avoid getting your feet burnt in the desert? It says you need something on your feet. If so, what?
3 What has the eagle got to do with it?
4 What part do the canoe and crocodile play?

1 To enter the mine INSERT JEWEL
2 GIVE FERN to Indian trader and wear the shoes he gives you to cross the burning sands
3 To prevent the eagle eating the corn, GIVE JAR (found by EXAM DOC at wagon)
4 To scare away the crocodile SHOW HANDBAG. Paddle the canoe with the branch.
(Apache tips courtesy of GEOFF BLAKEY)

NEVER ENDING STORY

'Help! I'm stuck on *NES*. I have been to the Southern Oracles cave and flown to Spook City on Falkor. I've seen the paintings on the wall and in my possession I have a cape, a small piece of leather, a fragment of glass and a gilt-covered horn. How do I get to new locations from inside the city? Is it something to do with the wolf, as seen on one of the paintings?' wails **ANTHONY PHILLIPS** of West Glamorgan. *TRY: GET ROPE from the area of the ruins and orchard, go in SW and NW directions and remove the planks to reveal staircase down. Tie the rope to the hook. (Thanks to G BARR.)*

SCOTT BURNS wonders of the same game if the Luckdragon can fly, and how to make it fly, and what the crystal and the piece of broken glass are for. *Take Falkor when in possession of Auryn and he will stay with you. Say FLY SOUTH if you wish to go south. Drop the crystal in the room with the strange machine and you will be told how to pass the sphinxes. (Thanks to regular JOHN WILSON.)*

LORD OF THE RINGS

JACO CEBULA of Fife writes: 'I, like Ryan Smith in July's CRASH, have managed to complete Melbourne House's game by starting on the second part of the adventure. I would very much like to complete the first part but my problem lies in crossing the Brandywine by ferry. Once Sam has turned the handle and the ferry is across I find it hard to cross because I simply do not know the correct command. Also, I cannot find a way through the old forest and end up getting lost or dying of starvation. I would be incredibly grateful if you could help me solve these problems.

'PS If you are wondering how I got to the old forest without being able to cross the river it is because I cheated and left the ring at Bag End and went over the bridge to Merry's house.'

At the landing stage the handle has to be turned five times: once by yourself and twice by each of your companions (DEREK JENKINS). Go E from the dark tunnel to a mossy place in the old forest. Go E to a wide glade and E again to a grassy place. Go SE to a bare hilltop then S to a bank on the Brandywine River. (AYMAN HAKEIN)

DAVID PRIDDLE of Cardiff has a problem in Game One. He wishes to know what he can do about the green knight and the red lady. *Attack the knight till he disappears (eating food between attacks to keep your energy up). At the tower kill the woman, ignoring her promises. (DES DAVIES)*

THE HELM

'I've been stumped by Firebird's adventure *The Helm*. What is the purpose of the mirror, the bulb, and the spectacles?' wonders **RICHARD DRAGE** of Manchester. *Where the keyboard lies in the centre of a room use the mirror to deflect the lightbeam. Get the octopus while carrying the bulb and use the spectacles to burn the haystack to reveal a needle.*

DUNCAN LEWIS of Derbyshire would like to know how to open the castle doors, what purpose the griffin serves and where the salt is. *Castle doors: if you hold the needle pick lock. Open the doors and go S. Drop the griffin and it will break the box open and reveal a diamond. Use the hollow reed to get through the spring to Dead End and the rocksalt.*

SEABASE DELTA

DUNCAN LEWIS also has a couple of problems with another Firebird game.

1 How do you mend lift No 2?
2 Where is the ink for the pen?

1 Open the panel with the key which was found in the food farm. Examine the telescope and you will see the small metal disk used to play a computer game. Drop the washing line with the loudspeaker magnet attached to retrieve the disk.
2 Fill the fountain pen with ink from the injured octopus (MATTHEW TUCK)

COLOUR OF MAGIC

ALASTAIR CUSHION of Cornwall asks: 'Can you please tell me how to get off the pirate ship in Part Four of Delta 4's *Colour Of Magic*? I have the bucket and the three bottles of rum, but how do I get past the pirate who guards the lifeboat?'

Get all the bottles of rum. Then, starting at the drunk sailor, leave one bottle per location leading to the edge of the ship. GET BUCKET. The sailor should fall overboard. Climb into the boat and keep bailing it out. (MATTHEW HOBBS)

LORDS OF TIME

'How do you clear the stream and what do you do with the lonely narcissus (Zone 1)?' asks **MR MAC** of Antrim. *Stream: tie plank with rope, drop plank across stream. Narcissus: EXAM NARCISSUS, give looking glass to narcissus. (A SNAPE)*

MAFIA CONTRACTS I & II

'I am stuck at 85% in *Mafia Contract II*. Could you please tell me what to do once you have killed Rossi on the penthouse floor of his offices?' asks **DANIEL WARD** of Coventry.

S,S, press ground, S, W, either walk or wait for 'walk' at crossing, W, S, W, W, open door, W, W, N, open door, up, open door, fire. Later get card, enter code and get folder.

JAMIE CORK of Buckinghamshire poses the following queries:

1 Where is Vincetti's office?
2 Where is the gun?
3 Is there any way of avoiding 'suddenly you hear a screech of tyres and a black Cadillac pulls up – three men jump out and blow you to bits'?

1 Insert the coin. Take the ticket from the machine and get into the train. Get off at Chinatown and say 'go up steps'. Now you can see a very big warehouse – Vincetti's office. (RONAN O CAOLLAI)
2 Go to the shop opposite the hotel and say 'Lou Ferrelo'. Show him the passport. Say 'yes' when asked if you expect a bulletproof vest. The gun is here as well. (ALAN WILLIAMS)
3 Keep moving – don't take too long to complete each section of the game!

Stuck in a dismal dungeon? Can't get past a 24-fanged monster? Missing that vital clue? Just write with your problems (and your adventure solutions!) to

Signstumps
CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*

Sorry – your Stumps can't be answered personally, but as many as possible are printed each month

A PLACE IN THE SHADE

Micronet users can get into *Shades* with a special offer of five free hours on the multiuser adventure – open to novices and experienced *Shadesy* characters alike. (The usual cost is 97p an hour.)

For information on Micronet, ring (01) 278 3143 or write to Durrant House, *8 Herbal Hill, London EC1R 5EJ* – and read the new CRASH comms column which makes its debut this issue.



IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT ON THE NIGHT

Dear Derek
Thanks a million for printing my 'poetic' tips for *The Red Lion* in Issue 42. It was great to see them occupying an important-looking scroll. However (there's no pleasing some people), I think I should point out a small typographical error. The last bit should read not 'the Lord of the Right', but 'Lord of the Night'. The only reason I mention it is to avoid accusations of political bias, no matter how appropriate comparisons between the Mire Lord and certain right-wing politicians might be.
CHRISTOPHER WARD, Mystic Software

YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS

Dear Derek
As promised many moons ago, when I still had the spectre of A level exams hanging over me and devoted 25 hours a day to revision (well, it seemed like that!), I've finally got round to writing the *Doomdark's Revenge* pokes program.

When entering the program don't be disheartened by the length of it – it's half the length without the REM statements. Leave out any lines between 601 and 681 you do not want, but you must include the end marker (line 691). Also, only the first data block is checked, so with the poke data you'll just have to double and triple check it yourselves.

Running the pokes program, it will ignore the BASIC loader of *Doomdark's Revenge*, but load the headerless code. It will then black out for a minute till the screen attributes flash on, but the border will remain masked black for a further minute. Don't worry about this, it's just me being clever.

The list below details all the pokes:

1 NO MIST (lines 600-601) does exactly that – no mist to restrict the view of Icemark.
2 MOVE THROUGH ANYTHING (lines 610-611) allows you to move at night through the icy wastes, to move out of battles at any time, not become immobile when utterly tired, and to move into any fortress or city without approach or attack.
3 NOT KILLED BY DRAGONS (lines 620-621) allows you to pass through dragons, wolves and so on without the fear of being killed.
4 CHOOSE AT NIGHT (lines 630-631) is especially useful if moving at night through use of poke 2.
5 FREE WARRIORS (lines 640-641). You or your fortress do not lose any troops when recruiting or posting. In other words, an extra hundred troops are created every time you use post or recruit.
6 SEE SCREEN BUILD UP (lines 650-651). Every time you move you see the new picture being generated. It looks like the landscape is advancing towards you and is especially useful in looking 'behind' mountains and forests.
7 ALWAYS RECRUIT (lines 660-661). If you use the approach key the character will always be recruited. You can even recruit Shareth The Heartstealer!
8 NO MOVEMENT AT NIGHT (lines 670-671). With this the computer does not move any of the characters at night, it only decides the battles. Only to be used if you want a really easy game or for use with poke 9.
9 CONTROL ANY CHARACTERS (lines 680-683). When pressing CHOOSE, all the 128 characters are listed in a total of seven pages. To help you, all those characters you have not recruited are in blue (black is dead, red is your side). This can be used in a number of ways:
 i) By pressing 5 on the list page you can look through the eyes of Shareth The Heartstealer and see where she and her armies are, using it as a warning for your troops.
 ii) By use of poke 8 eliminating the computer from character movement you could have a proper two-player game. The first player would take control of Luxor and the second player control Shareth, with the computer there simply to decide the outcome of the battles. You would have to use a pen and notepad to note down which characters Shareth controls and it would call for much honesty on the part of the players. However, it would produce a very interesting game, either having to fight against Shareth who is controlled by a different strategy or by playing Shareth and seeing the game through her eyes. See if you have a better strategy for Shareth than the computer does.

I hope you find these pokes useful and I am sure you will find many different uses for them, especially with poke 9ii.

```
  1 REM DOOMDARK'S REVENGE POKES
  2 REM BY PAUL STEPHENSON
  3 REM 19th JUNE 1987
  4 REM WARNINGS :-
  5 REM SCREEN BLACKS OUT
  6 REM FOR 1st MINUTE
  7 REM BORDER MASKED BLACK
  8 REM FOR 1st 2 MINUTES
 10 CLEAR 65535
 20 LET P=23440 : LET T=0 : GOSUB 200
 30 IF T<>10425 THEN BEEP 1,0 : PRINT "ERROR
    IN 1st DATA BLOCK" : STOP
 40 LET P=60000 : GOSUB 200
 50 PRINT $0 ; AT 1,2 ; "START DOOMDARK'S
    REVENGE TAPE" ; AT 15,0
 60 RANDOMIZE USR 23440
200 READ A$ : IF A$="" THEN RETURN
210 FOR F=1 TO LEN A$ STEP 2
220 LET A=CODE A$(F)-48-(7 AND A$(F) >"9")
230 LET A=A*16+CODE A$(F+1)-48-(7 A N
    D A$(F+1) >"9")
240 POKE P,A : LET P=P+1 : LET T=T+A : NEXT F
    : GOTO 200
500 DATA "31CB5C2160EA11445CD5"
501 DATA "016400EDB0DD213AB011"
502 DATA "9001AFD6F908F3CD6C05"
503 DATA "30EF215DB006007EED67"
504 DATA "7EEE5E772310F6AF3210"
505 DATA "B121FF5A772BCB7420FA"
506 DATA "DD21004011901B3EFFCD"
507 DATA "76B0DD2600110401CDC5"
508 DATA "B03FC33270B0CD69B0C9"
509 DATA ""
600 REM NO MIST
601 DATA "3E1832666EAF32B563"
610 REM MOVE THROUGH ANYTHING
611 DATA "211819225E84"
620 REM NOT KILLED BY DRAGONS
621 DATA "3EC9324B83"
630 REM CHOOSE AT NIGHT
631 DATA "3E3E3254863EC332BF7A"
640 REM FREE WARRIORS
641 DATA "AF322987324F87"
650 REM SEE SCREEN BUILD UP
651 DATA "3E7A329965"
660 REM ALWAYS RECRUIT
661 DATA "3E3E32D57C3E1832407D"
670 REM NO MOVEMENT AT NIGHT
671 DATA "3EC932F681325367"
680 REM CONTROL ANY CHARACTERS
681 DATA "213E39228F7321328222"
682 DATA "9173215D182293733EF1"
682 DATA "329573"
689 REM END MARKER
690 DATA "C325B1",""
```

PAUL STEPHENSON, Leeds

700 REM PAUL WINS THIS MONTH'S £20 OF SOFTWARE
710 GOTO ISSUE 46

DB

PERFECT PUZZLES

Dear Derek
I am writing on quite a number of points so I will be as brief as possible. Firstly, on the subject of graphic/text adventures. You have said you prefer adventures with graphics – why? The only adventure I've played where the graphics added to the game was *Warlord*, and this meant the text had to suffer. In fact in many cases graphics detract from a game – *The Secret Of St Bride's*, Level 9 games, for example. I personally prefer longer text – you've got to admit Level 9 games without graphics are far better than those with graphics.

Next, I would like to commend you for the excellent Adventure Trail Extra. It was certainly a job well done, and maybe the adventure section should be expanded every month . . .

Also, I would like to put forward a suggestion for a new subsection entitled Favourite Puzzles (or some more imaginative title). In this section readers could say what their ▶



favourite puzzle in an adventure was, and detail what happens. My favourite is in *Worm Of Paradise* (Level 9) where the sign 'Dump Rubbish Here' has to be moved to clear a pile of rubbish, and put somewhere else to build a new one.

S NICHOLLS, Newcastle

Graphic vs text adventures: I've been here before. The point is we now have graphic computers with 128K of memory, and I don't think it's too much to ask for good pictures AND meaningful text. I do take your point when it comes to the old 48K-only games, though. As for your idea about a new section for 'problems I have loved', it's an excellent idea. I'll get thinking about it immediately.

DB

YOU WANT PROBLEMS? I GOT PROBLEMS

Dear Derek
I am writing this letter to talk about the thing that makes or breaks an adventure, the problems to be specific. Yes, the things that drive you up the wall for days till you finally write a desperate plea to Signstumps then realise the answer two minutes after you have posted it. We have read about the seven sins of adventuring but I think an adventure is affected mainly by the problems in it.

1. The Classical Problem
Never having played the original *Adventure*, I recently bought *The Serf's Tale* and found myself able to pass through it relatively quickly because nearly all of the problems fall under this category, simply because they have been repeated in other adventure games (or stories). For example, water the plant then climb up it. Swing over river with rope (*Kentilla*).
2. The Obscure Solution Problem
What about this for a real palaver? In *Return To Eden*, throw the sweet pea to the Ouija bird, it lays a brick. Plant the brick whereupon it turns into a house plant! Well it's all very well for the author but what about the player? Has anybody who has played the game (Level 9's worst) passed this problem without a solution sheet? These are the worst type of problem, the type that can put you off playing the game at all.
3. The Obscure Vocabulary Problem
Thankfully not too common anymore and extinct in the upper-class adventures. You soon reach the stage of typing in the obvious solution in every conceivable manner possible (a thesaurus will help) but nothing happens till you type it in Chinese!
4. The Logical Problem
The following problem in *The Pawn* was made hard to solve because of my instinctive reaction to place it under category 2 or 3 (obscure solution or vocabulary). After finding neither the hoe nor the rake were strong enough by themselves to lever the boulder off the path, I removed my shirt, tied them together and tried again – SUCCESS! This problem would be classified as category 3 in a lesser adventure but with the excellent language parser in *The Pawn* this can be made common place.

So now, all you budding adventure writers, it is the problems that control the playability of the adventure so take them from categories 1 and 4 only (classical or logical). With the whole of the 128K available and using *PAW* truly brilliant adventures can be written even to the standard of *The Pawn*. *The Pawn* has achieved cult status simply because of all the things that can be done that aren't connected to the final solution, that is, all objects can be examined (including background), people can have interactions in intelligent ways (no set phrases like *Sherlock*). Objects can be tied together or filled even if they have no part to play. Too many adventures fall into the trap of only letting you act upon solutions to problems rather than giving freedom in movement. Surely the Golden Age is only just beginning in the adventuring world.

J WILLIAMS, Lincolnshire

You lost me at one point, but otherwise an excellent letter. I particularly liked the Chinese comment and the part about getting the solution just after sending off a plea – I'm sure many readers can relate to this. Still, other readers may be stuck on the same parts of an adventure and Signstumps provides help.

DB

ANOTHER ONE HOOKED

Dear Derek
I used to think no discerning player could be converted from arcade games to adventures – but now I'm eating my words! Because I live within a short train journey's distance of London, I popped along to the Microfair in search of cheap games. Indeed, I found what I was looking for, *The Sentinel*. Though I only took a tenner I still had a pocket full of change; consequently I hunted for another bargain. For some quite unknown reason I walked over to an adventure stall. Searching through I picked up *The Price Of Magik*, a Level 9 adventure. I suppose it was the artwork that first attracted me to it, but I couldn't help noticing what was at the bottom of the cover: 'A CRASH Smash . . . *CTW* Pick of the Week . . . ' etc. 'Gripes!', I thought, 'some game!'. Readily parting with my last few pennies I left. Since the first time I loaded *The Price Of Magik* I've been hooked; I didn't realize just how much fun I had been missing. To give some indication of how good *Magik* is, I've played it more than *The Sentinel*, which is really saying something, seeing as *The Sentinel* is probably the best nonadventure game to hit the good old Speccy.

This letter is aimed mainly at so-called arcade freaks. If you have never tried adventuring, for Grudd's sake buy one (recommended by CRASH of course) and try. It's very annoying having wasted years of computing not knowing what you are missing.

JAMES HOME, Kent

I can't really print your address for swapping games – as you requested – in an organ as dignified as CRASH, James, but do put your swaps in local shops and fanzines, which I'm sure will elicit a good response. And keep on adventuring – it's nice to see a reply to those arcade chauvinists who think all adventures are dry, intellectual bores!

DB

MAKING A HASHI OF KOBYASHI

Dear Derek,
Please print the solution to the Wisdom and Understanding doors in *Kobyashi Naru* which Ewan McEachran of Staffordshire submitted in Issue 41. I have been getting nowhere for two months. If you can't print the solutions in Signstumps, could you send a letter with them?

DAVID CAYZER, Tyne & Wear

Well, David, I can't send you the solutions – Adventure Trail is a magazine column only, and I haven't the time to correspond with readers on a personal level (so DON'T send self-addressed stamped envelopes – I will endeavour to answer as many queries as possible in Signstumps).

But good news now – below are solutions to the two unsolved parts of Kobyashi Naru. (Ewan McEachran sent in solutions to all three parts of Kobyashi Naru for the Adventure Trail Extra, but I decided to print only the Knowledge solution then, just to tantalise you!)

WISDOM

There are two ways to do this, but mine is more fun.

1. *Activate the solance. Pull it. This will free it of the meat block. IMPORTANT – activate it again (this will deactivate it).*
2. *Go north. Analyse tunnel – to find a cliff. Analyse cliff to find an omask – like a gas mask. Get it. Use omask.*
3. *Go east till you find a giant snail called a Silicoid. Activate solance. Cut antennae. Activate the solance again (to deactivate it).*
4. *Go east quickly till you can go no further. Swim centre to find a giant clam. Use solance, which will block its jaws. Swim clam. Get pearl. Be careful not to get the solance here – if you do, death will follow.*
5. *Swim water. Ascend (anything). You will now be on top of a cliff. Descend cliff.*
6. *Go south then east to finish.*

UNDERSTANDING

1. *Analyse megavnit. Activate megavnit. Get lasalite.*
2. *South, east, jump pit, east.*
3. *Driods will appear, and if you analyse the yellow area you will see a strange wheel. This is the object. Do not go east. Activate lasalite so it gives off a strong magnetic field. Drop it – this will attract the wheel, but also the driods.*
4. *Go west. Throw the wheel into the pit. One of the driods will pick it up, and you then jump. Hover driod.*
5. *He will remove you to his perch. Analyse perch to find a secret passage. Do not go down. Go west. Analyse passage to find the lasadroid near. Activate the lasalite. Use it. Go east.*
6. *Analyse computer – you will find some buttons. Activate computer. Then go south. Get wheel (again). Retrace your steps to the start. West, west, jump pit, west, north. Then go north to finish.*

The ending is very tame.

DB

Send your queries to

SIGNSTUMPS, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB



MORE FUN THAN A BARREL FULL OF MONKEYS
JACK THE NIPPER... II
IN COCONUT CAPERS
Help! Stop! The country has had enough, no more can it take of the devilish pranks and obnoxious behaviour of darling little Jack. Off to a land where many of your kind were banished long before. Off to Australia Jack you must go!!!
The Daily Bash
Jack the Nipper Banished
Britains most notorious nipper is deported to Australia
"I don't like your stinking climate anyway you *cough!*splutter...igs. There's plenty of places just waiting for me. Ha!!" bluffed Jack defiantly.
On the ground, in the air, you can't keep a mischief maker out of trouble and with all those pretty air hostesses around ... well what do you expect.
GERONIMO
Its no fun being cooped up. Maybe there's something down there that fancies being mugged ... bitten ... spat at or pinched. As ever poor Mam and Dad dutifully follow their nauseating little offspring.
POSTER OFFER
Capture the full excitement of Jack and his jungle capers with this super full colour wall poster. Only 99p post and packing included. Order form in the game.
GREMLIN
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ALL THE DUST, HIGH-SPEE THRILLS COU

Mirrorsoft's latest foray into the world of software features the adventure and excitement of high-speed bikers riding for the ultimate prize of the Mean Streak bike.

To celebrate the release of the game, Mirrorsoft is also offering pretty much *the* ultimate prize – five winners from both CRASH and ZZAP! (plus a selected group of delinquents from Newsfield and Mirrorsoft) will be taken on an action-packed Super Action day on Saturday 14 November, while 50 runners-up will each get a specially-made Mean Streak key fob.

What's Super Action? Well, it's a madcap company consisting of people who don't live in broom cupboards and have never been known to let a even a sticky-bun crumb knowingly pass their lips; instead, in search of the different, they specialise in action sports and events for jaded people in search of excitement.

If you don't fancy riding a Quad Bike, or a Trimoto, or a Meteorite buggy or taking part in a spot of archery . . . then don't bother entering the competition. If, however, you're the type who laughs death in the face and eats three Shredded Wheat for breakfast, then read on . . . On second thoughts, go and take a look at this month's CRASH demo tape and have a look at the Mirrorsoft game, *Mean Streak*.

Okay. Done that? Good, now check it out again and take notes this time, 'cos the answers to the following questions are in the tape – somewhere – or around it!

1 What is the name of the Mean Streak track and what is it better known as today?
2 How many levels are there in Mirrorsoft's *Mean Streak* game?
3 Who are a) the designer and b) the programmer of *Mean Streak*?

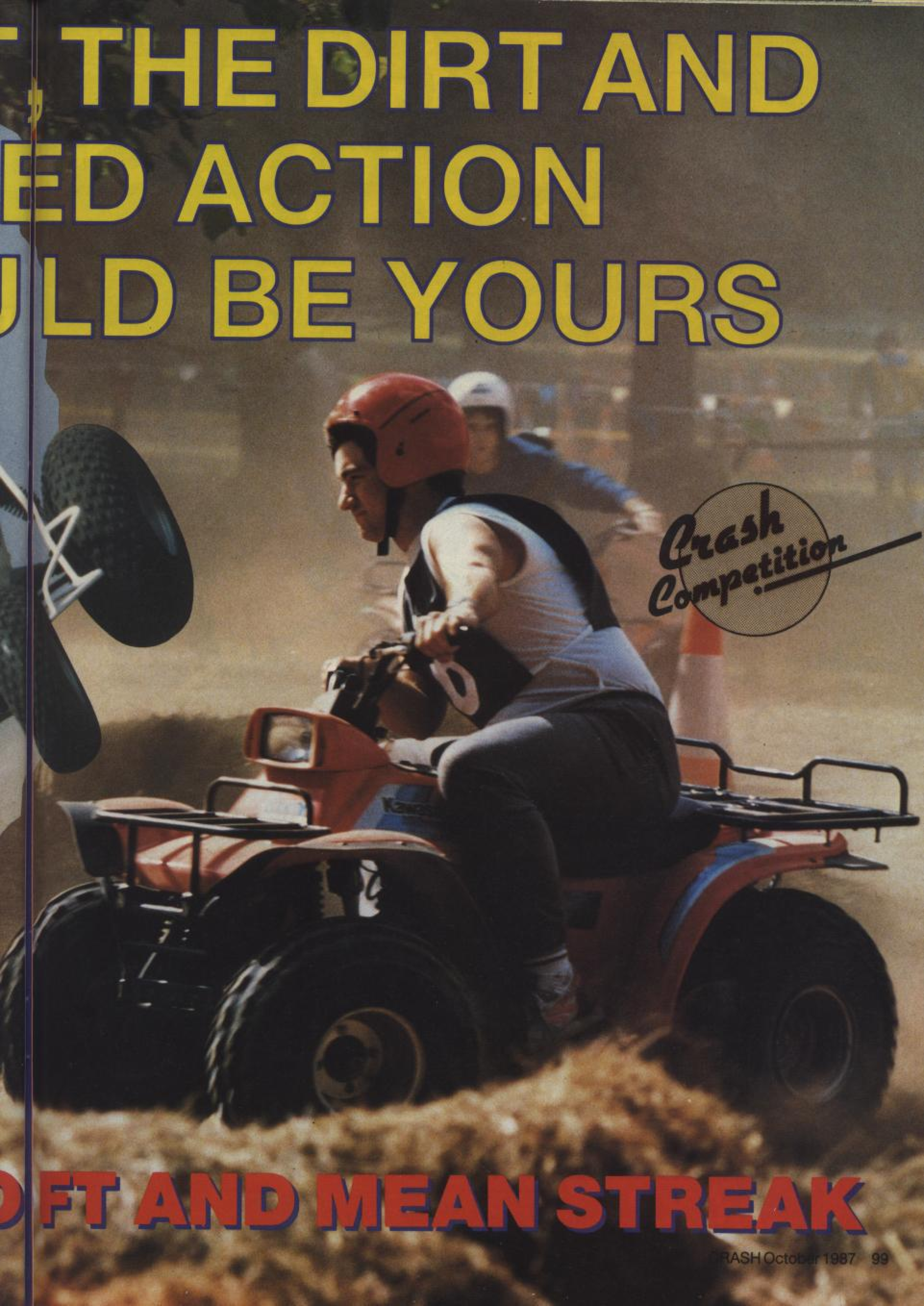
Got that? Right, put your answers on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope and rush them, posthaste, to the **MEAN STREAK THRILLS COMPETITION, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.**

Entries should be in by Friday 23 October, and you must include your name, address **and a telephone number** where we can contact you in order to arrange the day out if you win. Right, get cracking. I'm just off to have a go at some underwater shark-wrestling to soothe my nerves – it's on a video.

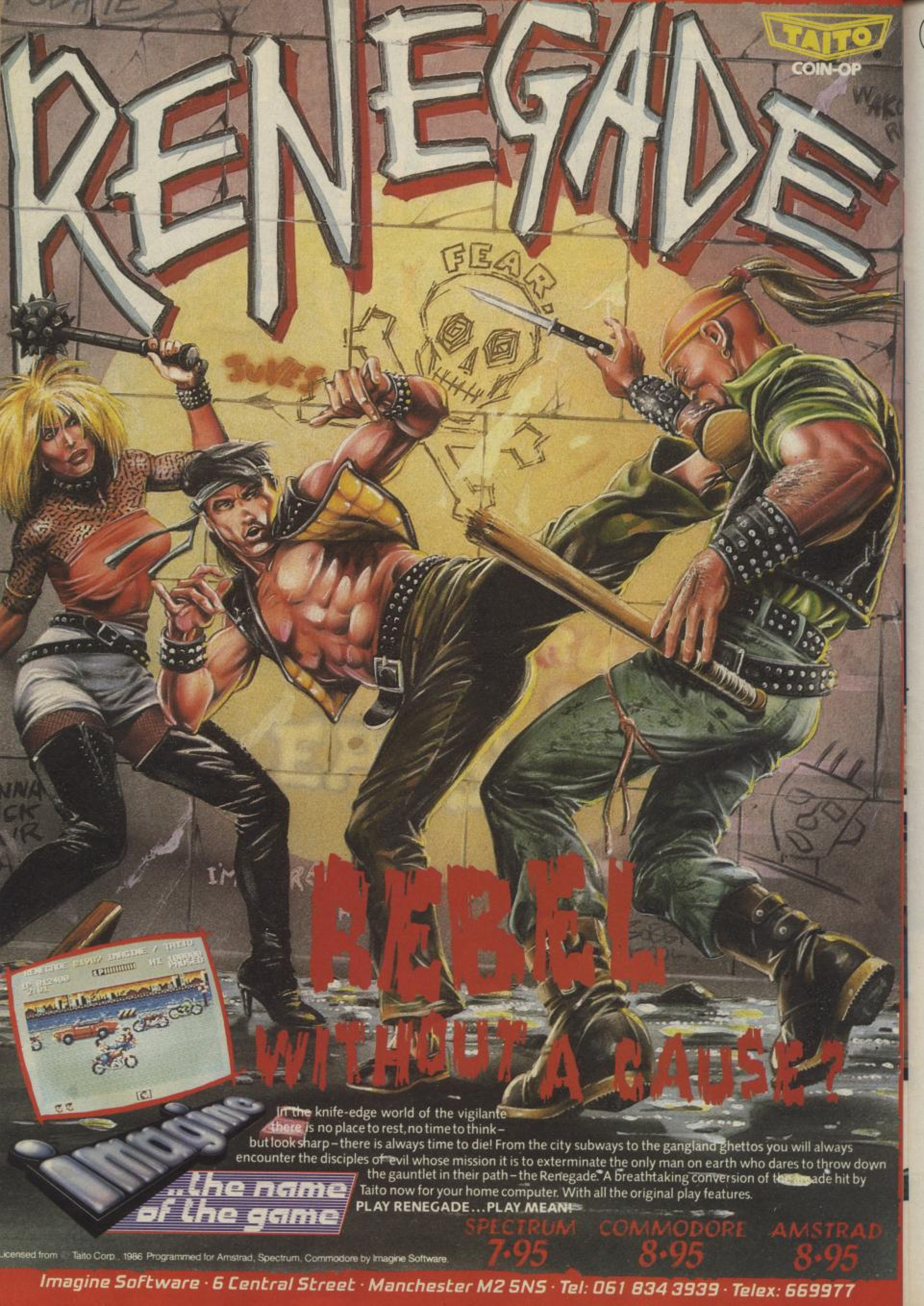


THANKS TO MIRRORSO

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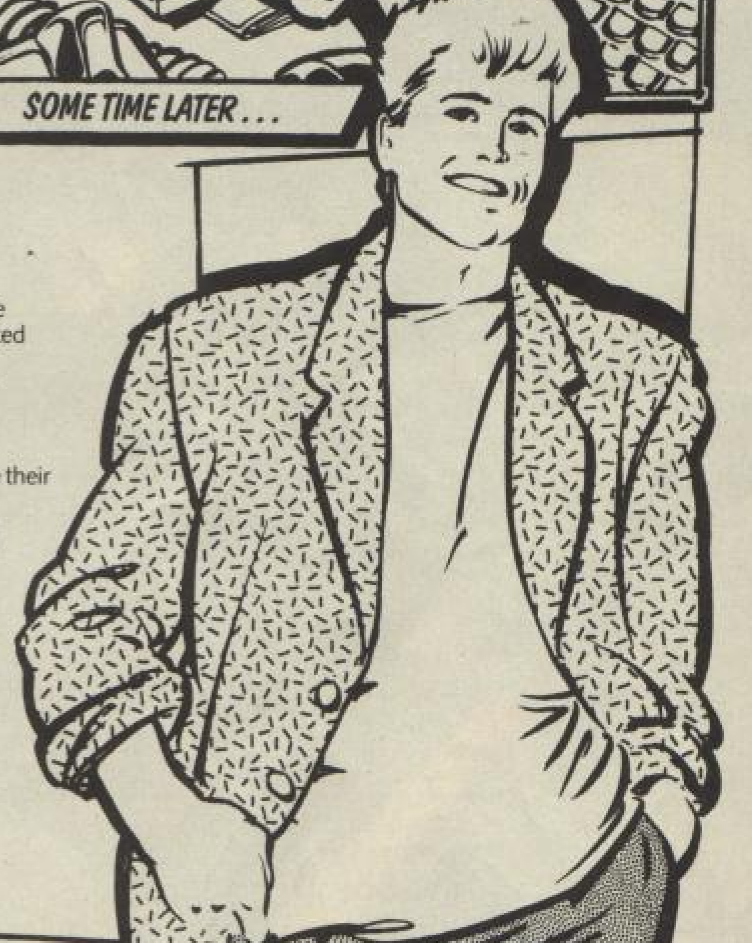
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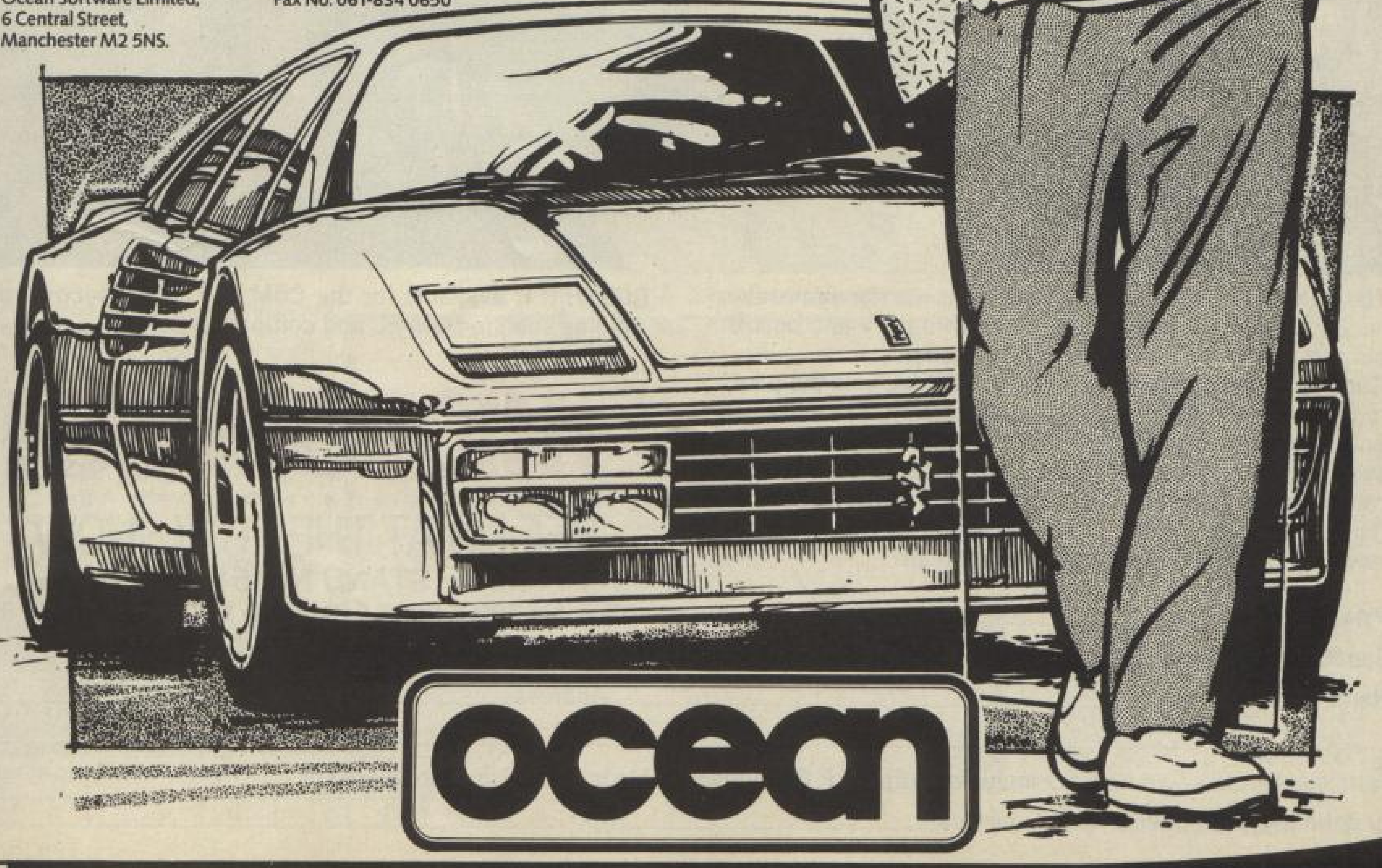
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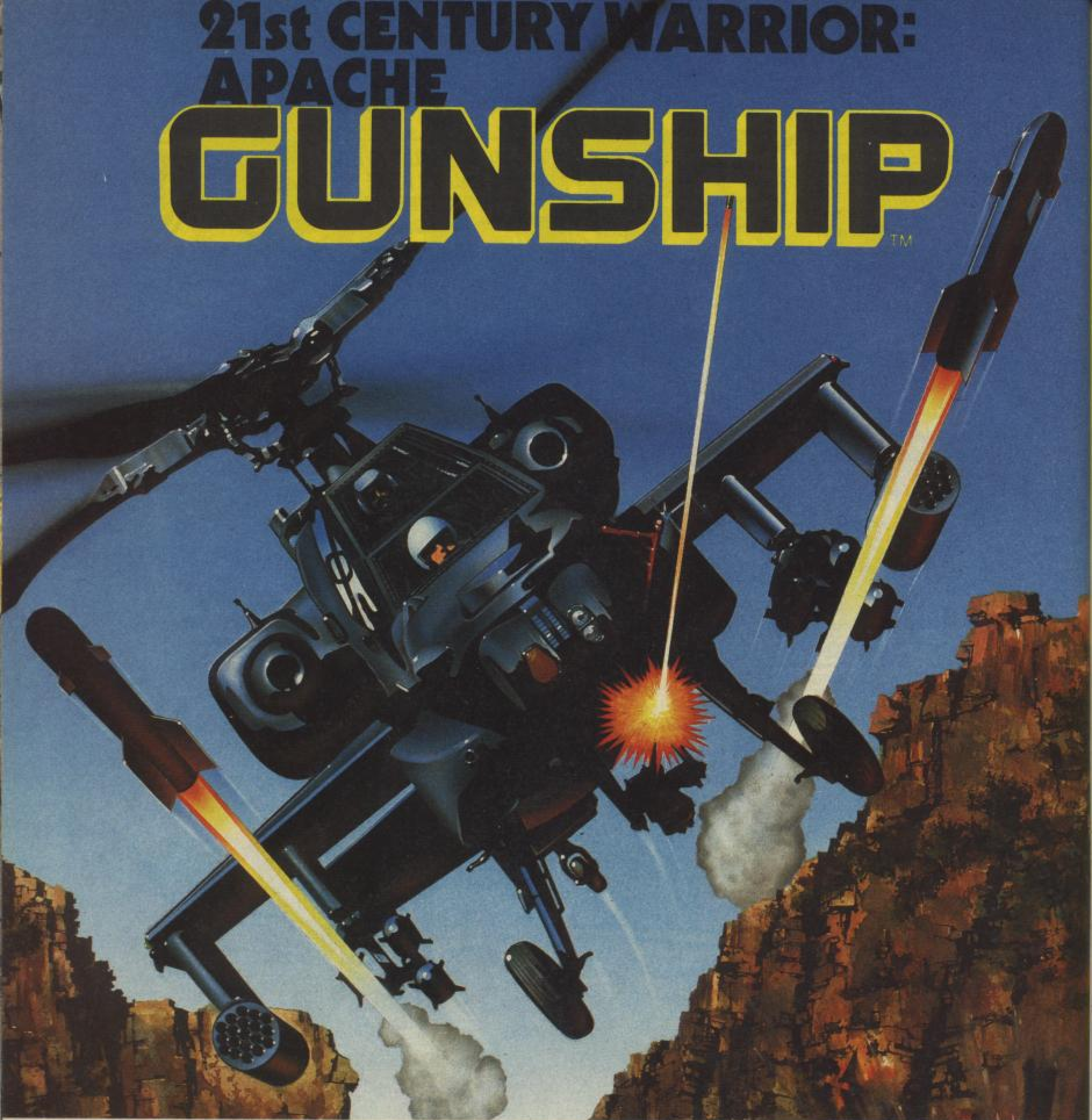
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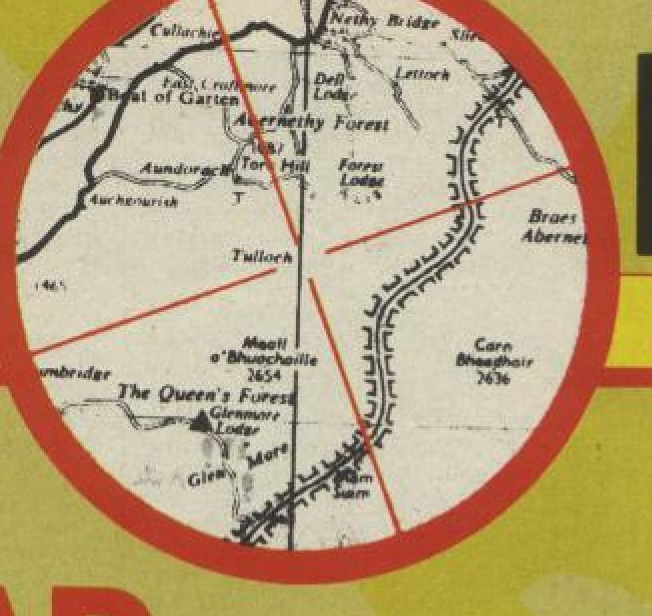
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FRNTLINE

with Philippa Irving



READ ALL ABOUT IT

There's been an alarming slump in the number of wargames finding their way to my garret in north Oxford. Either all those brave people who write wargames and expose themselves to my sarcasm have decided to go on holiday, or the Post Office has eaten the parcel containing them . . .

A couple of months ago I explained my ratings system in detail in Manoeuvres, my column in CRASH's Commodore sister ZZAP! 64, and it seems fair that I should do the same in Frontline.

Ratings very artificial, and quite unscientific; but they are the accepted way of summing up impressions in the world of computer-game reviews, and a percentage breakdown system such as CRASH uses is a lot more accurate and interesting than just giving single figures. This is the way I think about each rating:

Presentation is sometimes difficult to disentangle from Graphics, but in theory it covers every aspect of the game except the game. The packaging, the ease with which orders can be given, and the general aesthetic impression the screen display gives are all considered. Presentation isn't everything in a strategy game, but just as an exam candidate with neat handwriting is more likely to get a sympathetic marker than an illegible scrawler, a tidy and professional appearance makes an immediate impression on consumers and reviewers.

Graphics in wargames are always a compromise. They can rarely do as much to conjure up an atmosphere as arcade graphics can, and have to be content with being representational. But this doesn't mean that well-drawn and clearly-set-out graphics can't improve a wargame.

Rules are extremely important in a wargame, particularly a historical one. It isn't so much the case with Spectrum wargames, but some Commodore games are virtually rulebooks with a bit of computer animation. I always commend historical material and complain about its absence. It's important that if the game structure is complex it should be explained in sequential and idiot-proof detail, and personally I like to see the game mechanics exposed – though other people don't.

Authenticity: taken with any literalness, no wargame is particularly authentic. If you think about it, you wouldn't really want it to be – all the blood and dead bodies and deafening shells and gunfire would not be entertaining. But games can create their own atmosphere, and the player can feel involved in the world the game reflects. It's the equivalent of our willing suspension of disbelief when watching drama, and it helps, of course, if there are no obvious factual blunders or intrusive bits of gameplay.

Playability: all computer gamers know what playability is. It's the quality that stops you pressing the reset switch, or pulling out the power lead if you're still running a rubber model. It's the quality that can have you zapping or collecting or assault-breaking into the early hours. Though wargames, like adventures, are more sedate and detached than arcade shoot-'em-ups, you can still find seven hours slipping by undetected if you get involved in a really playable game. Playability can be disrupted by the smallest things, such as computer-opponent turns which take just a little too long and or scrolling menus which are just slightly too complex to work. A lot of shallow and dead-end games can be quite playable at first, and I comment on that honestly.

Overall: a game can be greater than the sum of its parts, and I don't feel that the Overall percentage rating has to be a cocktail of the preceding ratings. Beautiful graphics or badly-produced rules may be irrelevant if the game itself is a turkey or a classic.

The ratings are only my personal assessment. In the main body of the reviews I try to be as descriptive as possible so you can decide, irrespective of what final percentage it gets, whether you want to buy the game or not.

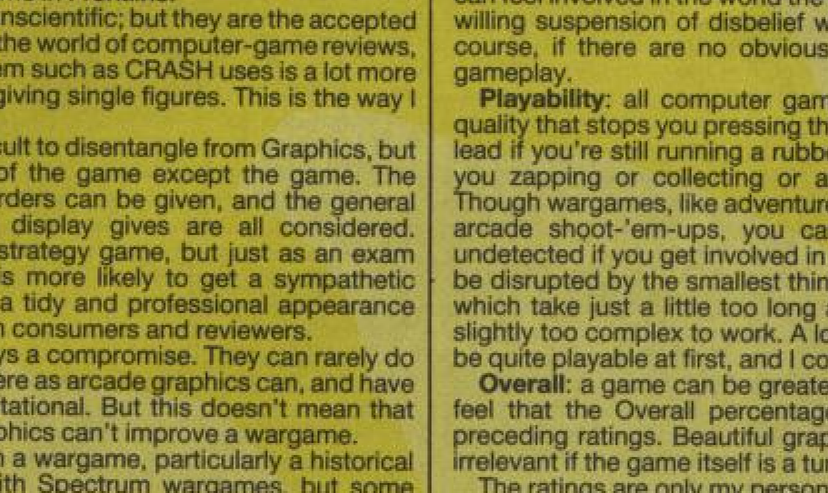
ROUNDHEADS

Producer: **Lothlorien**
Price: **£9.95**

This is the first wargame I've seen based on the English Civil War of the 1640s, which seems odd when you consider how popular a subject this is with 'live' wargamers; battles between the Roundheads and Cavaliers are re-enacted every summer by enthusiasts who delight to dress up in period military gear and fight it out in the name of a long-dead cause. *Roundheads* is an attempt to condense the entire period into a Spectrum.

In October 1642, the English Civil War broke out between the Cavalier forces of King Charles I and the Parliamentary army led by the Earl Of Essex. My history is usually abysmal (an essential qualification for a wargame reviewer, for at least I can tell if a game has taught me anything . . .)

► *Horace Goes Skiing* **in the 17th century?**



but I do know that Oxford was the Royalist capital during the war and that King Charles lodged in Christchurch college.

All the major cities in England had been forced to choose sides, and the very brief scene-setting paragraph in the *Roundheads* rulebook says that as the game starts the Parliamentary forces – known as Roundheads – have their greatest support in the south and east. They are also negotiating for Scottish support, which they appear to get. Up and down the country peasants have been turning their pitchforks into weapons, leaving their fields, and rallying behind one cause or the other. This has not done much for the country's agricultural stability, and food supplies are restricted to what the passing troops can forage.

Roundheads ambitiously attempts to recreate the entire war at both tactical and strategic levels. You can move whole armies up and down the country, ►



BRIEFING

Have any of you out there *ever* played *any* game other than *Chaos*? Tips for Games Workshop's apparently never-to-be-forgotten classic, reviewed in CRASH Issue 16, seem to account for half the mail Briefing receives – but this month's column is ABSOLUTELY THE LAST WORD on *Chaos*! *(She says - Ed)*

James S Smith of Dumbarton in west Scotland suggests some unusual ways of using the spells. If you've just killed an opponent, stand one of your own creatures on the same space and cast Vengeance, Decree, or Justice Of Dark power on it. If the spell works, your creature will be transfigured into a remarkable likeness of the recently-slain opponent. This sounds like a bug!

Gooey blobs also can be used in ways which nature never intended. Cast an illusionary creature, and allow it to be covered by a gooey blob. When the creature is freed, it is disillusioned. In *Chaos* this is a good thing.

If you mount a resurrected horse, pegasus or manticore, you become an undead creature. But entering a magic wood, magic castle or dark citadel loses you this undead status.

Ian Day of Preston in Lancashire describes how to get hold of a dramatic spell called Turmoil, which works every time and moves everything around the screen – sometimes with fatal results. It can only be found in a magic wood, and can only be taken if you're in a tree. And be patient – the Turmoil spell only appears every hundred turns or so.

Moving on to that other venerable classic *Theatre Europe* (PSS), which has recently been rereleased as part of *Conflicts 1* (reviews: Issue 29 and 42 respectively), **Paul Hindle** of Lancing in Sussex makes the following suggestions:

Never ever launch more than two nuclear strikes in a game.

Never turn on the reflex system.

Don't let the computer choose enemy cities as nuclear targets. Enemy armies make much better victims.

Chemical strikes are pointless – they adversely affect your end-of-game rating, and you run the risk of nuclear response.

Play as NATO, because if the computer plays NATO it doesn't fight back!

Finally, a plea from **M Berry** of North Bridgend in Wales: 'Has anyone got a poke to stop the whistling noise the artillery makes during *Arnhem*? It's driving me up the wall!'

cutting down cornfields on the way; or you can fight single battles with small forces. The two phases of the game demonstrate how different reality scales affect wargaming, and it's interesting to see a combination of the grand and the detailed. This feature distinguishes an otherwise unremarkable game.

On the strategic level, the screen presents a map of England which is featureless apart from the noughts and crosses of the opposing armies. In the one-player game you have to be on the side of the King, which gives you a slight advantage at first; the Cavalier armies are better-trained and slightly stronger than the Roundheads. But the Scots soon come marching south to aid the enemy, so the rules advise the player to make the most of his superiority.

Incidentally, the lack of choice of sides in the one-player game makes the title *Roundheads* seem a little inappropriate, and because Roundheads And Cavaliers appears on the bottom of the screen I suspect there was a last-minute title change.

The player has command of two types of armies at the strategic level; real armies and 'trained bands'. These latter consist of the peasants-turned-warriors and other loyal or rebellious citizens from the towns, rounded up into some sort of fighting force. They can be used in battle, but they're not particularly reliable and tend to desert if they're moved too far from home or think the odds against them are too great.

The rulebook illustrates what the Roundhead armies and trained bands look like, but neglect to make the distinction between their Royalist equivalents. One has to guess. My guess was that the large round blobs were the armies, and the smaller squares the trained bands. Confusingly, the instructions refer to the units as 'icons'. This may be a strictly correct use of the word, but it's certainly incorrect in the context of a computer game where 'icon' is always used to mean a control symbol. Here, the control system is a simple cursor-selection, which allows the player to move armies speedily. As the armies move they gather food points, which doesn't make sense; after all, wargamers are more accustomed to armies consuming food and resource points by moving. A food riot can therefore be quelled by sending the troops on a quick back-and-forth trip across the countryside.

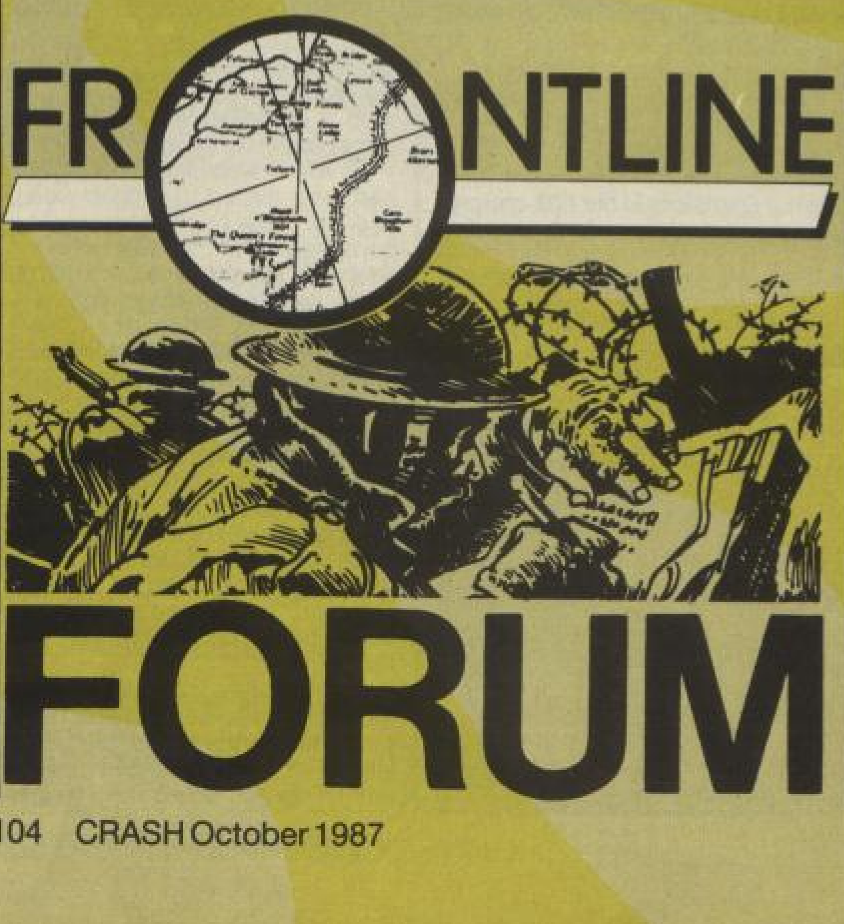
As the cursor is moved around the main map a window at the side of the screen scrolls neatly, showing a blow-up of the area currently under the cursor. The side window also displays more attractive versions of the army counters, with the Royalist army represented as crowned heads and the Roundheads looking like genially smiling grandfathers. This *seems* more useful than it is.

The close-up map doesn't actually show any extra detail apart from mysterious little houses, invisible on the main map, which may be intended to indicate cities. It's difficult to tell, for the rules make no mention of them. There is no way of telling which towns and cities are where, something I regard as very unatmospheric. If there was no room on the screen display there ought to have been a map in the rules to give a bit of colour and structure to the landscape . . .

The armies and trained bands are defined only by their strength and the amount of food they carry. It would have improved the coherence of the game immensely if the armies had been identified, even in the most rudimentary way. As it is, there is nothing to give them character and imaginative life, and even if dire consequences do follow moving a trained band too far from its place of origin it's not easy to keep track of where each bunch of pickaxe-waving peasants ought to be.

This is a pity, because in the tactical-level battles there's a great opportunity to tie the two

FRONTLINE FORUM



THE BEST OF ENEMIES . . .

Dear Philippa

On the subject of opponents in computer wargames, I feel I should write about *Vulcan*. I do not claim to be experienced at playing wargames, having only six to my credit, but I feel that the computer-controlled opponents in these games lack a certain quality.

In *Vulcan* I would accuse 'him' of not checking his reports to see if his units are capable of receiving supplies or attacking. On selecting the two-player option from the set-up menu, I find many of his units without supplies, or extremely weak.

Knowing this failing in his skill as a General, I have managed, as the Axis player, on separate occasions to wipe out the Northern Allied units and the Eighth Army. The former was done without moving more than the Centauro division from the south. The 15th and 21st Panzer divisions held the entire English army at bay by fortifying behind a wadi for eight days. As the Allied units I have managed to win 'The Tunisian Campaign' in only eight days!

Hidden movement could prove to be an extremely important factor in improving computer opponents. I hope R T Smith does not miss this worthwhile feature out of his next game because of what A M Wright said in CRASH Issue 42. this month. Being unable to see the enemy leaves the element of surprise. I have frequently travelled along a road



▶ **Rough edges spoil an imaginative concept in** *Roundheads*



strands together. When you've moved your armies around an isolated, defenceless enemy unit you can choose to enter the tactical level, and the screen display changes entirely to show a battlefield. This, quite cleverly, bears a clear relationship to the landscape on the main map; though the scale is quite wrong, for you find yourself battling all the way across the westernmost tip of Cornwall. The combat is grandly entitled the Battle Of York, or the Battle Of London, or the Battle of wherever you've decided to bash a few Roundheads. That's a fine touch, but it's offset by more basic deficiencies of detail.

Though the strategic-level display is reasonably polished, the battlefield is a masterpiece of primitive-style Spectrum and looks like it's been drawn in crayon. The background is a glaring blank, the infantry units are matchstick men, and the four terrain types are represented very simplistically. It is, unfortunately, strongly reminiscent of those extremely early Spectrum games like *Horace Goes Skiing*.

The number of red matchstick men the player finds opposing the Roundhead blue matchstick men is related to the strength and number of armies he had ranged against the enemy in the map on the strategic level, and there's something curiously satisfying about this. According to the rules the units are distributed randomly, though they always start out in clusters of their own kind.

Infantry, cavalry and artillery make up the fighting force, with the unexpected addition of supply wagons. I assume that the supply wagons are intended to represent the army's food stock – that vital statistic displayed in the strategic map – but I see no reason why they should be taken onto the battlefield, unless the troops are supposed to refresh themselves with sandwiches and cups of tea during slack phases in the fighting. Really, they're there to provide something vulnerable to attack and defend, and if you see that you're hopelessly outnumbered it's a good idea to make straight for the enemy's food wagons and destroy as many of them as you can before you get wiped out.

Orders are given to individual units with a cursor, in an unsophisticated fashion. It is difficult to extract from the rules a clear understanding of how the combat really works. It seems you can give each unit a single order to attack and then watch as it carries out the order, following the target if it moves.

This doesn't seem to work in practice. I found the only sure way to make an attack was to specify each one individually, and because this is a game played in real time the old problems arise; you can only deal with one unit at one time. To be fair, the number of units involved are small enough to be manageable, though this style of frantic, cursor-hopping play does destroy the atmosphere. As each attack is made, the 'before and after' strength of each unit is flashed at the bottom of the screen.

Strength units tend to be chipped off at the rate of one per unit, with only minor and not very predictable variations. Even artillery units firing at long range lose a strength point when they make an attack, and this seems illogical to me. I was disconcerted to discover that my food wagons made pretty invincible fighting machines when I tried to attack with them; either the rock buns are pretty old, or there's a bug in the program. The enemy's food wagons are easy to destroy.

There is some variety in the play of the battle scenes. The 'defensible area' type of terrain allows infantry to shelter from attack, and though the woods and hills seem to have no effect on combat it's impossible to move across rivers. And, like all simplistic games, *Roundheads* has a degree of tacky addictiveness.

The battle lasts as long as it takes for one side to eliminate the other, or till you choose to exit from it. The instructions claim that you can only do this after 15 minutes, but this is incorrect; maybe it's a misprint for '5 minutes'. When you're returned to the strategic screen the appropriate army counter has disappeared and the attacking forces are depleted according to the losses suffered. This is where I feel a sense of involvement could be generated by giving the units names, names carried over to the individual divisions in the battle scenes. It would be satisfying to know which divisions belong to which army, which are trained soldiers and which are volunteer rabble. The distinction vanishes into anonymity at the tactical level.

There are several irritating points of presentation. The rules are vague and confusing. The instructions on giving orders are ambiguous, the Cavalier unit symbols aren't shown, and there's no warning that the game has to be reloaded if you want to start again. The game is artificially slowed down by the rule which insists that three minutes must separate each entry to tactical battle, a restraint which seems to be designed to make the two-player game fairer. In the one-player version it's simply irritating.

Roundheads isn't as bad as it looks; I enjoyed it up to a point, and see the potential of some of the things it tries to do. But there's a lack of detail, depth, atmosphere and – somehow – solidity, deficiencies which are all too common in Spectrum wargames.

Presentation 70%
It's reasonably polished in places, and the orders system is so simplistic that it would be hard to make it cumbersome

Graphics 60%
The strategic-level map is presentable if unimaginative. The tactical map, though serving its functions, is in the *Horace Goes Skiing* school of Spectrum art

Rules 50%
Hardly voluminous, considering the potential of the historical subject, and bordering on the inadequate

Authenticity 55%
Real-time setting destroys the atmosphere, and lack of geographical information and unit names doesn't help

Playability 70%
Certainly easy to get into, and smoothly-flowing

Overall 59%
Some interesting features, but missable



and suffered heavy losses from a concealed unit. I also enjoy leaving one or two weak Italian divisions in the bottom southeast of the map ready to cut the supplies of an overambitious Eighth Army.

To improve the enemy opponent, in *Vulcan* at least, I would suggest two possibilities. First, the computer should check his own reports, and second, difficulty levels could be introduced by which the computer cheats to different degrees. He could examine both your units' positions and their reports, thereby being able to plan his attacks to greater effort. To counterbalance this there should be an option to play the computer with open movement.

You have dropped the opponent rating. It seems a sensible move as it is impractical to hope to assess an AI routine in a week when you have so many other things to do. You could, however, publish an opponent rating in a subsequent issue if you have found the time to assess a game more thoroughly.

A G Popkin, Haywards Heath

Unfortunately I rarely have the time to return to a game once I've taken it apart for review. I'm too busy grappling with the next batch!

PI

NOT A PENNY MORE . . .

I've had a letter from **Roger King**, *who's trying to establish a magazine for Spectrum wargames; he plans to include reviews, previews, interviews and competitions. He desperately wants to hear from people interested in contributing, and from anyone who could let him use a photocopier for under a penny a sheet. Contact Roger at* 46 Bury Lane, Datchworth, Hertfordshire SG3 6ST – *and keep watch on FRONTLINE and FANZINE FILE for progress reports.*

ALL TOGETHER NOW

PAUL SUMNER reviews the latest compilations – there's gold in them thar software shelves, if you know where to look

EVER SINCE the Spectrum stormed into the homes of young innocent children, compilations of previously released games have been lurking on the software shelves. From the outset compilations were purchased for quantity more than quality – the largest collections seemed to give more value for money, more games per pound. But as buyers became more prudent software houses found themselves having to be more selective in what they put on their cassettes.

THE BUDGET MARKET has just got into compilations, with two distinct approaches. On the one hand you have The Power House throwing together most of their £1.99 releases, past and present, in a bundle of budget fun – ***Powerplays***, eight games for £9.99. None of the games are very impressive, the point being quantity rather than quality. On the other hand you have Tynesoft looking at the budget problem from a completely different angle: in the ***Micro Value Pack*** you only get four (very old and not very good) games, but for the extremely cheap compilation price of £3.99.

No longer are compilations just collections of rejected old games. With the growing importance of budget software in the sales charts (see our feature on page 45), most compilations are now slickly-presented and well-advertised packages proclaiming *value for money*. Most software houses have even set up departments which scour the market for games to go on compilations.

YOU MIGHT THINK summer is all over now, but in attempt to brighten up everyone's lives US Gold has released *Summer Gold*. In true US Gold style this latest bundle of fun offers a wide range of games, from old favourites like *Bruce* (How many times did you complete it?) *Lee* and *Beach Head II* to recent simulations: *Tenth Frame* and *Dambusters*. And, like The Edge, US Gold throws in an adventure, *Rebel Planet*, to counter the aggressive bashing and blasting of the arcade games. There's nothing really bad in *Summer Gold* – what you've got is six respectable full-price games for £8.99.

With the supposed summer software slump now past, a whole plethora of compilations is about to be released to satisfy our appetite in the dull time between *The PCW Show* and Christmas.

This collection of compilations shows the dilemma facing the buyer on the high street. Should you go for a great big bundle of software that you've never heard of? Or is it better to play safe with compilations of well-established oldies?

AFTER the success of *Star Games*, Gremlin Graphics has quickly hit the streets with ***Star Games II***. Now part of the US Gold conglomerate, Gremlin offers old favourites such as the very popular *Highway Encounter* (originally from Vortex) along with another CRASH Smash, Ultimate's *Cyberun*. On the same tape, in the shadow of these two giants, can be found a couple of Lucasfilm games *Ballblazer* and *The Eidolon*. Of course Gremlin also gets a look-in with the underrated and very playable *Trailblazer* and their Gauntlet clone *Avenger*.



My advice is to stick with well-known titles; at least that way you won't buy a package with any really rancid games. And whatever you do don't discard a compilation just because it contains a few golden oldies – they're often more playable than new games for which more time has been spent on presentation than on content.

If you're going out to buy a particular game, it's worth looking around on the compilations first. Most full-price games reach their peak sales within a few weeks, so within a few months they can be on compilations, where their sales will be steadier. If you're really shrewd you could give up buying individual games altogether, and just get the hits all in one package – though this way you tend to be about six months behind the rest of the software scene. Have a good look around, there's bound to be a compilation for you somewhere.

Note: the information boxes on this page give each game's original CRASH Overall percentage and then the issue in which it was reviewed. N/R means the game was not reviewed in CRASH.

IF YOU LIKE life on The Edge, you'd better not miss ***Classix 1***. This 'collector's edition' brings together all Softek's and The Edge's hits since they first entered the Spectrum software scene in 1984. The star of the package is without a doubt *Bobby Bearing*, in this 3-D *Marble Madness*-type game, the eponymous cute little ball of fun has to rescue his mates. This little wonder picked up nearly every computer award available and makes the package immense value for money. Also hidden away on *Classix 1* is The Edge's first adventure, *That's The Spirit*. It's not often we see adventures on compilations, but maybe *Classix 1* has something for everyone . . .

FOLLOWING in the path of *Soft Aid* and *Off The Hook*, which raised £350,000 and £75,000 for their respective charities, a new label called Backpack releases ***Kidsplay*** in midautumn and looks set to follow its predecessors. The worthy charity this time is the National Society For The Prevention Of Cruelty To Children, which will use the profits to combat child abuse (see the news piece in CRASH Issue 43). The contents range from the 1984 Ultimate success *Lunar Jetman* to hits of 1987 like *Xeno, Deactivators* and *Mailstrom*. Nine of the ten games scored over 85% in CRASH – so *Kidsplay* gives you excellent value for money while helping a deserving cause.

OCEAN'S big release for autumn looks set to start a completely new trend in theme compilations. Covering nearly every conceivable sport, ***Game Set And Match*** brings together ten of the most popular recreational simulations released in the Spectrum's lifetime (in fact, 23 if you count the subgames in *Daley Thompson's Supertest* and *Hyper Sports*). The only surprise is the inclusion of *Super Soccer* over the far superior *Match Day* (because so many of you have already got the latter, I'm told). The package includes three CRASH Smashes and two which were very near misses. So whatever you fancy (in the way of sport!) Ocean seems to have got it covered. This lavish package of four cassettes should be at your local sports centre . . . umm, computer shop now at the reasonable price of £12.95. And if you've got a +3 you can get a two-disk package for £17.95 (much less than a season ticket to Leeds).

ACTIVISION is also getting in on the bundle bonanza with a *Lucasfilm Prestige Compilation* (see the CRASH offer on page 62 . . .). Out of all four games *The Eidolon* (on yet another compilation) is probably the best piece; the other three suffer badly from conversionitis caught from the Commodore.

KIDSPLAY
Backpack

Xeno	86% 35
Deactivators	85% 34
Night Gunner	91% 3
Marsport	95% 22
Monty On The Run	94% 20
Starion	94% 16
Mailstrom	59% 35
Starstrike	93% 11
Bounty Bob	85% 21
Lunar Jetman	95% 1
	£9.99

STAR GAMES II
Gremlin

Highway Encounter	95% 20
Cyberun	90% 28
Trailblazer	88% 34
Avenger	85% 36
Ballblazer	71% 28
Eidolon	76% 36
	£9.99

GAME SET AND MATCH
Ocean

GBA Basketball	37% 44
Konami's Tennis	60% 33
Super Soccer	56% 37
Daley Thompson's Supertest	76% 22
Barry McGuigan's Boxing	88% 25
CDS Pool	77% 6
Ping Pong	90% 28
World Series Baseball	91% 16
Jonah Barrington's Squash	87% 17
Hyper Sports	92% 19
	box of four cassettes £12.95
	two Spectrum +3 disks £17.95

POWERPLAYS
The Power House

Hercules	N/R
Slingshot	N/R
Time Flight	29% 40
Cyrox	46% 40
Squidge	N/R
Odd Ball	N/R
Sword & Shield	N/R
Tomb Of Syrinx	26% 40
	£9.99

MICRO VALUE PACK
Tynesoft

Panzadrome	77% 24
Tidy Tony	N/R
BB Strikes Back	42% 23
Steelyard Blues	N/R
	£3.99

CLASSIX 1
The Edge

Bobby Bearing	94% 31
Brian Bloodaxe	86% 14
Starbike	77% 10
Psytraxx	69% 10
That's The Spirit	N/R
	£8.95

SUMMER GOLD
US Gold

Tenth Frame	55% 38
Impossible Mission	76% 22
Rebel Planet	85% 31
Dambusters	75% 21
Bruce Lee	91% 16
Beach Head II	74% 24
	£8.99

LUCASFILM PRESTIGE COMPILATIONS
Activision

Koronis Rift	70% 40
Ballblazer	71% 28
The Eidolon	76% 36
Rescue On Fractalus	75% 33
	£9.99

the crash CHARTS



TOP GAMES OCTOBER

The three charts compiled from the votes of CRASH readers is the most realistic chart for gauging the popularity of Spectrum games – it is the games that are being played that get the votes, not the games that are in the shops this week or month.

And the votes are important. It's up to you to let us know what you feel, so fill in the voting forms which live on the results pages and in FRONTLINE to make your voice heard.

If you don't want to carve up your issue of CRASH, we understand. Use a photocopy if you like, or copy the details from the voting forms onto a postcard, or the back of a sealed envelope, and send that to us instead.

Apart from the satisfaction of registering your vote, there's always the chance of winning a prize. Each month we draw 15 winners from all the voting forms received – five for the HOTLINE, five for the ADVENTURE and five for the STRATEGY chart.

A top prize of £40 worth of software (your choice, not ours) and a CRASH T-shirt is awarded to the first slip drawn from the HOTLINE votes, and another £40 of goodies and a shirt goes to the ADVENTURE and £20 of goodies and a shirt goes to the STRATEGY

Four runners up from each ballot box collect a CRASH T-shirt and a CRASH Hat.Soget those votes in to the **CRASH HOTLINE CHART**, **CRASH ADVENTURE CHART** and **CRASH STRATEGY CHART**: ***PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.***

Not much movement in the chart this lazy summer, with nothing new above Number 15; the heat's got to *Cobra* and *Paper Boy*, though, and they've both collapsed. Note the new (▶) sign before the Issue 42 Smash *Zynaps* – this indicates that the game has NEVER been in the chart before, whereas (-) just means it wasn't there last month. Ocean drowns the other software houses with almost a third of this month's Hotline titles, but US Gold's *Gauntlet* is still at the top for the seventh successive month . . .

This month's £40 worth of software (plus the usual T-shirt) goes to Chas Ault *of Eccles near Manchester; runners-up are* C J Wright *of Wirral on Merseyside,* Eric Stewart *from the Isle Of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides and* James Titheridge *of Chandlers Ford in Hampshire.*

Strategy Top 10

1 *(1)*	**VULCAN**	CCS
2 *(2)*	**REBELSTAR RAIDERS**	FIREBIRD
3 *(5)*	**ARNHEM**	CCS
4 *(3)*	**THEATRE EUROPE**	PSS
5 *(-)*	**DOOMDARK'S REVENGE**	BEYOND
6 *(8)*	**TOBRUK**	PSS
7 *(9)*	**BATTLE OF BRITAIN**	PSS
8 *(-)*	**THEIR FINEST HOUR**	CENTURY
9 *(-)*	**GALLIPOLI**	CCS
10 *(4)*	**DESERT RATS**	CCS

There's been a huge volley of votes for the Strategy Top Ten, reports a Charts Minion on the scene – interestingly, though, the strategists seem to share opinions, and there have been only 14 different titles listed in three months of the chart. CCS's *Vulcan* and Firebird's *Rebelstar Raiders* have held the top since the beginning.

First out of the upturned helmet was Matthew Verry *of Dartford in Kent; runners-up are* Iain Turner *of Southend-On-Sea in Essex,* David Brown *of Stanford-le-Hope, also in Essex,* Stephen A Graham *of Carlisle,* Mark Lawton *of Stoke-On-Trent in Staffordshire and* Ian King *of Tipton in the West Midlands.*



Hotline Top 20

1 (1)	**GAUNTLET**	US GOLD
2 (5)	**HEAD OVER HEELS**	OCEAN
3 (3)	**ENDURO RACER**	ACTIVISION
4 (6)	**URIDIUM**	HEWSON
5 (7)	**ELITE**	FIREBIRD
6 (9)	**MATCH DAY**	OCEAN
7 (12)	**BOMBJACK**	ELITE
8 (2)	**PAPER BOY**	ELITE
9 (16)	**BARBARIAN**	PALACE
10 (4)	**COBRA**	OCEAN
11 (8)	**ARKANOID**	OCEAN
12 (19)	**THE SENTINEL**	FIREBIRD
13 (17)	**ALIENS**	ELECTRIC DREAMS
14 (11)	**STARGLIDER**	RAINBIRD
15 (-)	**THE GREAT ESCAPE**	OCEAN
16 (10)	**FEUD**	MASTERTRONIC
17 (►)	**ZYNAPS**	HEWSON
18 (-)	**BATMAN**	OCEAN
19 (-)	**GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS**	ELITE
20 (-)	**AUF WIEDERSEHEN M.**	GREMLIN GRAPHICS

Adventure Top 20

1 (2)	**THE HOBBIT**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
2 (4)	**HEAVY ON THE MAGICK**	GARGOYLE GAMES
3 (1)	**SPELLBOUND**	M.A.D.
4 (3)	**KNIGHT TYME**	M.A.D.
5 (5)	**LORDS OF MIDNIGHT**	BEYOND
6 (11)	**DOOMDARK'S REVENGE**	BEYOND
7 (8)	**THE BOGGIT**	CRL
8 (-)	**BORED OF THE RINGS**	CRL
9 (10)	**LORD OF THE RINGS**	MELBOURNE HOUSE
10 (-)	**FOURTH PROTOCOL**	CENTURY HUTCHINSON
11 (13)	**GREMLINS**	ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL
12 (6)	**STORMBRINGER**	M.A.D.
13 (17)	**SHADOWFIRE**	BEYOND
14 (7)	**RED MOON**	LEVEL 9
15 (16)	**THE PRICE OF MAGIK**	LEVEL 9
16 (-)	**MARSPORT**	GARGOYLE GAMES
17 (-)	**NEVER ENDING STORY**	OCEAN
18 (9)	**FAIRLIGHT II**	THE EDGE
19 (12)	**DRACULA**	CRL
20 (-)	**DUN DARACH**	GARGOYLE GAMES

The Hobbit makes it to Number One, where its parody *The Boggit* was in Issue 40. But darkness is closing in on *Fairlight II*, and *Spellbound* looks like slipping back down to third place, whence it rose to the top last month.

David Barrows *of Northampton is the big winner, but don't forget these other adventurers:* James Cooper *of Newbury in Berkshire,* Chris Beck *of Rotherham in South Yorkshire,* Allan Price *of Leeds, and* Peter Chessman *of Waterlooville in Hampshire, who met his Waterloo trying to find the voting form – presumably in Issue 43 where, sorry, we left it out. (Lloyd getting too much space for the Forum again . . .)*

1987 PBM MAILBOX



Aloha, and welcome once more to the wondrous hobby of play-by-mail gaming with BRENDON KAVANAGH. 'So,' you ask, 'what has happened in the PBM world this month?' (Well, it's one way of making conversation.) The answer: there's a special feature on KJC Games's . . .

EARTHWOOD HINTS AND TIPS

MATTHEW AYRES from Southminster in Essex has sent some basic tips for new *Earthwood* players. Matthew was a joint winner at the end of *Earthwood 20* and comments that though he enjoyed the game there is definitely room for improvement.

According to Matthew, the game's biggest letdowns are its map and the lack of extra features in the endgame.

Anyway, on with the tips . . .

1 Never forget that 'the pen is mightier than the sword' – also bear in mind that one cannot function properly without the other!

2 Of *Earthwood*'s 35 cities, only 17 are inhabited at the start of the game.

3 Player characters should try to ally themselves with a nearby race to share cities in the area.

4 The best cities are those near the edge of the map with high food production. If possible, secure a group or 'cornerfull' of cities; cities not on the front line can support those that are.

5 Most city tactics are unfavourable to the defender, so concentrate your forces in tight, strong groups wherever possible.

6 With a bit of forethought you can predict where you might encounter Non-Player Characters (NPCs) – for example, tree fairies in woodlands . . .

7 The secrets of success are good diplomacy and control of cities. As most recruiting is done from cities (and they are the only suppliers of food and gold), they are vital if you don't have any good alliance ties.

8 Take an active part in the game. Players who ignore diplomacy or are totally impassive invariably drop out (or are knocked out) because there's no excitement for them.

Thanks a lot, Matthew. Has anyone else got tips for games not yet covered in PBM Mailbox? Send them in!

EARTHWOOD

EARTHWOOD may be vaguely known to CRASH readers; it's the fantasy game upon which Jade Games is accused of basing its defunct *Arcadia*. But KJC Games's *Earthwood* is well-established.

It caters for 25 players. The player takes a role (King or Wizard, perhaps) – and, as in most games, what you are affects what you can and cannot do.

Besides your main character, you have control over three independent groups of creatures; your character must always be with one of these groups, and you're kept aware of what's happening to the other two.

The game is set on a large map with 35 cities. The object is to use your groups and your powers (magical and diplomatic) to gain control over the majority of the cities. This is done by a mixture of exploring, spying, trading, fighting and avoiding monsters!

Earthwood is computer-moderated and seems quite popular. Each game should last 18 months (according to KJC Games) – provided you're not knocked out earlier!

Startup costs £5, for which you receive the rulebook, setup and the first three turns. Each turn thereafter costs £1.50.

Write to KJC Games at *5 Vicarage Avenue, Cleveleys, Blackpool, Lancashire FY5 2BD.*

SPECIAL OFFER

A NEW VERSION of *Earthwood*, called *Earthwood – The Sea Kings*, will be launched on October 1 1987. This will be a naval version of the old game, replacing cities with islands in a big sea infested with monsters and Non-Player Characters!

Anyone new to EITHER *Earthwood* game can use this CRASH voucher with their first payment to claim two extra free turns – so that's setup, the rulebook, and five turns for a fiver.

Don't forget to tell KJC Games whether you're starting *Earthwood* or *Earthwood – The Sea Kings*!



Name ....

Address ....

....

Postcode ....

This special voucher from Issue 45 of CRASH entitles a new player in KJC Games's Earthwood *or* Earthwood – The Sea Kings *to two extra free turns – in addition to the setup, rulebook and three free turns you get for your £5.*

Just send this voucher (the original, please, not a photocopy!) in with your application and startup fee.

The offer is valid as long as the voucher is received by KJC Games on or before November 23, and needless to add only one voucher may be applied to each startup (otherwise Guru Denise would be playing free for 18 months . . .)

PBM NEWS

NEWTY BUT NICE

STEVE NEWTON of Newty Games is seeking a new GM for his game *Faction Magician*, covered in CRASH Issue 41. He writes: 'We are in dire need of another GM (the response from your article was quite incredible, which has helped lead to our current overstretched situation, so I hold YOU responsible (!)). The pay ain't great, but it'll buy a beer or six on a Saturday night down the pub and it's great fun. I'd be grateful if you'd send out this plea to the populace and ask those interested to drop me a line with a few details about themselves.

'Our turnaround time has doubled – some of our players are having to wait up to ten days for their reply, so any help would be appreciated . . . '

If you have the time, inclination and commitment to GM a game of *Faction Magician* then drop a line to Steve.

Faction Magician has a new address: *Druids Cottage, Carn Brea Villages, Redruth, Cornwall TR15 3BL.*

But PLEASE bear in mind that there's a lot of responsibility involved in GMing a game!

IT'S AN ORGANISED CRIME!

NAB SOFTWARE, GMs of *Aegyptus* (an involved US game based upon ancient life – review coming soon(er or later)), has imported another game from the Yanks. *Family Wars* is set in American cities during the Twenties and Thirties. Players become 'kingpins' in a crime family, and you have to control your own turf while expanding your territory and influence in the political arena.

Alliances are possible, though different victory conditions then apply.

Family Wars sounds a bit like *It's A Crime!* with knobs on; I'll give it an overview in CRASH in a few months' time, when I've seen the rulebook.

NAB's Nick Barnett points out that the game is entirely computer-moderated and should last for between 40 and 50 turns. He hopes to offer three turnaround schedules (weekly, fortnightly and three-weekly) at different rates. Thus a game could continue for between one and three years.

For further details, write to NAB Software at *7 Oakwood Drive, Aspley, Nottingham NG8 3LZ.*

NOVA GEN

I'VE RECEIVED lots of letters wondering what's happened to *Conquest* – it seems turn reports suddenly stopped arriving, without explanation. Well, DON'T PANIC!!!

In this month's mailbag was a letter from a new company called Nova Productions. Nova has taken over the management of *Conquest* from Conquest Games, and has been operating a supposedly improved version since June!

According to Nova's Laurence Norman, the original version of *Conquest* was too complex and time-consuming. Steve Brunt wisely redesigned it, but failed to playtest the new version. Result? Numerous rule changes and an unreliable turnaround.

So Nova has redesigned some areas of the game to make it more playable, and improved turnaround to one or two weeks in the process. Future developments could well include computer moderation . . .

A *Conquest* startup now costs £4, and the turn charge is £1.50 with no extras. I'm curious to see how the game has changed, so I'm starting up very soon; while waiting for a PBM Mailbox report, you can contact Nova Productions at *PO Box 685, Colchester, Essex CO4 3SX.*

► ***Conquest*'s new-style computer-generated turnsheets are a great improvement on the old handwritten ones. The map's impressive, too!**



PBM FORUM

A POSTCODE WRITES

Dear Brendon
After a bit of indecision, I finally joined this band of half-crazed psychopathic megalomaniacs you call PBMers. I am now enjoying *Vorcon Wars 84*. Thank you.

But I have a grumble. If our turns are late, do we have any comeback to the Post Office? For example, my turnsheets sent from Bracknell have thrice been repostmarked; once Dundee, once Perth *(what? Australia? - BK)* and once York. Dundee and Perth I can understand, but since when was York in Scotland *(Oh - BK)*?

I could understand these troubles if there was no postcode, but since PA38 4BY is unique to Kentallen (where I live), and is printed on all of my turnsheets, I am a little confused.

I don't know if it happens in the other direction, but I bet it does.

Is there anything I can do? It don't 'arf slow things down. I actually missed the first turn of Game 100 because I was cheapskate and used second class . . .

Angus Garfield Rae
Appin, Argyll
Scotland

A sad tale – but are we really only HALF-crazed?

If I were you I'd send my mail by recorded delivery. It'll cost you an extra 20p for each letter, but it's worth it for the peace of mind. There is no insurance offered for cash enclosed in your letter, but at least the Post Office guarantees delivery. Your only other option is to deliver it personally – a touch impractical, I suppose.

BK

WE STAND TOGETHER

Dear Brendon
After receiving my *It's A Crime!* results sheet I noticed that Game 14 is the official *C&VG* game! Apparently, because of good publicity 400 or so *C&VG* readers are taking part in *It's A Crime!* 14. So, fellow Game 14 CRASH readers, lets ally and CRASH Smash them . . .

Stephen Grant
Brighton
Sussex

Not a bad idea – though remember, Stephen, we have a few hundred players scattered about in an earlier game . . .

BK



FANTASTI

Dear Brendon
I thought I'd write in to tell everyone about the game *Further Into Fantasy*.

After applying for startup I received the rulebook and games magazine within one week. When I opened the package I was astounded by the quality of the rulebook, which has a coloured glossy cover and detailed information about the game printed neatly upon its glossy interior – very pro.

Further Into Fantasy is a fantasy *Dungeons And Dragons*-style game where the player role-plays as a warrior, sage or priest in the land of Dorm. Quite mystical.

I sent away for my first turn immediately and four days later I received another booklet (filled with player messages and news of

PBM FAN

TWO low-priced zines have come to light in this month's mailbag. The first is a selection of three games run from **Anthony Brown**'s address at *42 East Park Avenue, Holderness Road, Humberside HU8 9AE.*

Anthony and a few of his friends run a boxing game, a wargame, and a fantasy game. They charge 40p per turn (to cover costs). If you're interested, send Anthony an SAE and he'll write back to you as soon as possible.

And **Paul Hartmann**, who lives in Rotterdam in the Netherlands, wrote to say:

'Dear Brendon
I have been following your column ever since it started and I think it's high time I wrote you a letter.

Unfortunately, PBM is not very known in the Low Countries, though I'm trying to reverse that course with all my might. One of the things I have done has been the founding of a company to produce 100% Dutch games.

To date I have been running my company (Fantasia Arena) for just over a year and slowly people are opening their eyes to this wonderful hobby, though interest is minimal compared with that of Britain or the USA as yet.

Recently, John Nicholson let us run his game *Super Vorcon Wars* in a Dutch version. We also run two other fully computer-moderated games, both tactical space warfare, so we are making some progress.

If any of your readers are



IC FANTASY

the game's progress), along with a completed character sheet, a fact sheet, my turnsheet and a welcoming letter.

After playing for only a few turns I am convinced that this is THE best game available. Please print this letter to let other readers know about this game!

Justin Taylor
Newton Abbot
South Devon

Thank you, Justin. Laboratory Games's Further Into Fantasy *is indeed very well-produced; for further details send an SAE to Laboratory Games at Box 66, 19 Colburne Street, Swindon, Wiltshire SN1 2EQ.*

BK

NZINE FILE

interested in playing a Dutch game then they should feel free to write to Fantasia Arena at *van Basenstraat 118, 3067 ND Rotterdam, The Netherlands.*'

Paul writes a PBM section for the fanzine *Conflict Gazet* (double Dutch to me); he also plays ten(!) PBM games, so he'll be in next month's Diplomatic Directory.



THAT ADDRESS IN FULL

IF you're in the PBM trade and you've got some news to pass on, or you want to share your PBM hints and tips with hundreds of thousands of rapt CRASH readers, drop me a line! Write to: **Brendon Kavanagh, PBM Mailbox, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*.**

If you're sending an entry or an update to Diplomatic Directory, even if it's enclosed with another letter **PLEASE** write 'Diplomatic Directory' on the envelope so it can be processed quickly!

LUDLOW DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY SHROPSHIRE

DIPLOMATIC DIRECTORY has been running for some time now, and seems to be a popular part of PBM MAILBOX

★001 Adrian Neal
48 Marketstead Estate, Kirton, Boston, Lincolnshire PE20 1SL
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72 & 78; Capitol 15; Earthwood 52; Arcadia 6; Star Empires 1; Conquest*

★002 Jason French
78 Princes Road, Ellacombe, Torquay TQ1 1PA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 75 (Commander BLITAD)*

★003 Travis Smith
27 Sharmon Crescent, Braunstone Frith, Leicester LE3 6NW.
GAMES: *Starglobe 4 (SS Belle Julie)*

★004 Robert Darbyshire
22 Thornton Gate, Clevleys, Lancs, FY5 1JN
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 1 (Death Warriors); It's A Crime! 4 (Megacity Blues)*

★005 Stuart Millinship
17 Graveney Gardens, Arnold, Nottingham NG5 6QW
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 75 (Commander SHUTUN)*

★006 Mr G G Manganoni
109 Kings Road, Farncombe, Surrey GU7 3UE
GAMES: *Saturnalia; Crasimoff's World; Explorers of Orion; Lands of the Crimson Sun; Aes; Mark of Chaos; Untamed Land; Vesuvian*

★007 Mr C J McCarthy
39A Seaview Road, Liscard, Wallesey, Merseyside L45 4QN
GAMES: *Starglobe 1; Star Empires 1; Vorcon Wars 19; Saturnalia; Fleet Manoeuvres P107*

★008 Scott Macfarlane
2 Broomside Terrace, Costorphine, Edinburgh EH12 7LZ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60; Super Vorcon Wars 77*

★009 Paul Davidson
51 Waterloo Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire, Scotland KA9 2AA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60 (Commander PEPISH); Arcadia; Conquest*

★010 Kev Wasey
9 Clarkson House, Maysoule Road, Battersea, London SW11 2BP
GAMES: *Earthwood 30*

★011 Ian Hudson
53 Deepmore Close, Alrewas, Nr Burton-upon-Trent, Staffs
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 65 (Commander PESTIB); Super Vorcon Wars 77 (Commander FRUGAD); World of Vengeance (Ian's Invincibles nr Bury St Edmunds)*

★012 Gareth Evans
4 Whitelands Road, Thatcham, Newbury, Berkshire RG13 4AR
GAMES: *Arcadia 6 (Egg Groinside)*

★013 Mike Adams
774 Holmefield Road, Liverpool, Merseyside LK9 3PQ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars; Conquest; It's A Crime! 4 (Priests)*

★014 David Lane
23 Florence Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham N92 5HR
GAMES: *Casus Belli 5; Player 16*

★015 Martin Higgins
Wallesey Road, Wallesey, Merseyside L44 2AG
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72; It's A Crime! 4*

★016 Cliff Frost
175 Queens Road, Leicester LE2 3FN
GAMES: *Saturnalia; Arcadia; Earthwood 44; Kings of Steel 17; Arcadia; It's A Crime!; Swords and Shields*

★017 Robin van den Yssel
Smaragdlaan 172, 2332 BX Leideh, Zuid Holland, Netherlands
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 72 (Commander TREBIN); Starglobe 3 (The Dutchman)*

★018 P Brunstan
Cae Mari Pwn House, Thomastown, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan, South Wales
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 2 (Death)*

★019 Steve Vickers
26 Swinton Court, Harrogate HG2 0BB
GAMES: *Soccer Star; Saturnalia; It's A Crime! 4; World of Chaos*

★020 Barnaby Dellar
11 Priory Grove, Stockwell, London SW8 2PD
GAMES: *Starglobe 4*

★021 Stephen Holt
27 Rosemary Road, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk NR7 8ER
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 61 (Commander BRIDER); It's A Crime! 4 (Fighting Uruk-Hai)*

★022 Kevin Pack
Walnut Tree Lodge, 9 Kings Meadow Lane, Higham Ferrers, Northamptonshire NN9 8JE
GAMES: *Earthwood; Saturnalia; Starglobe 4; Orion's Finger; It's A Crime! 3; Casus Belli; Aes*

★023 Matthew Hanson
10 Denby Lane Crescent, Grange Moor, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF4 4EB
GAMES: *Starglobe 4 (SS Obsidian Fox); Arcadia*

★024 Gavin Marshall
36 Spur Road, Orpington, Kent BR6 0QL
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 71*

★025 Owen Whitehead
213 Park Road, Barnsley, S70 1QW
GAMES: *Aes ('Rillion' – E Side), Saturnalia (Grendl of the Web), Enchirodon (Brothers in Arms), It's A Crime (Brothers in Arms), From The Mouth of Hell (Elf), World of Chaos (Rillion Kerr), Soccer Star (Morning Star RS League)*

★026 Damian Manning
12 Warden Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B73 5SB
GAMES: *Starglobe (SS Alvon), It's A Crime (Merry Mob)*

★027 John Preen
12 Underdale Avenue, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 5DY
GAMES: *Starglobe Four (SS Broadsword of the Guild Alliance), Vorcon Wars 78 (Plonog)*

★028 John Kemp
9 Wold View, Caistor, Lincoln, LN7 6UU.
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 4 (New York Assassins), Arcadia 8 (Lord Centaurus at Jihad City, P27)*

★029 Milan Petronic
24 Dell Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, B30 2HZ
GAME: *Arcadia 13 (Draug Dur)*

★030 JC Fowler
11 Beaconsfield Place, St Agnes, Cornwall, TR5 0SZ
GAMES: *Starglobe Three, Arcadia 8*

★031 Kevin Edwards
52 Woodlands Road, Irchester, Northants NN9 7BU
GAMES: *Vorcon 60, It's A Crime! 4, City of Strife.*

★032 Jason Cottrell
17 Back Lane, Barrington, Cambs, CB2 5RF
GAMES: *Saturnalia (Axil Taranus), Tyranny (P5)*

★033 Michael R Stannard
44 Harrington Street, Cleethorpes, South Humberside, DN35 7AZ
GAMES: *Arcadia 10 (Mordran the Unknown at Seven Springs City)*

★034Malcolm Sums
76 Mount Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1YF
GAMES: *Soccer Star (Kilmore Oilers), Bradley's Football (Houston Oilers)*

★035 Paul Davidson
51 Waterloo Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire, Scotland, KA9 2AA
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 60 (Pepish), Arcadia 7 (Ped at Moriquendi City), Conquest (Anar Narion, maps 18/19)*

★036 S Davies
16 Clara Street, Ton-Pentre, Rhondda, Mid Glam, S. Wales, CF41 7HQ
GAMES: *It's A Crime! 4 (gang 315), Vorcon Wars 64 (Chotub)*

★037 S Wyatt
60 St Andrews Road, Shoeburyness, Essex, SS3 9JJ
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 73 (Prifun), Vorcon Wars 78 (Sathal), It's A Crime! 4 (Mercenaries), Kings of Steel (Woodland Alliance)*

★038 Richard Goff
20 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3HU
GAME: *Arcadia 12 (player 17)*

★039 Jason Huggins
35 Garratts Lane, Banstead, Surrey, SM7 2ED
GAME: *Saturnalia (Vetrex)*

★040 Dean Stuart
26 Ullswater Avenue, West Auckland, Bishop Auckland, County Durham DL14 9LR
GAMES: *Vorcon Wars 69 (THOPAL); Vorcon Wars 85 (TRIBER); Conquest; It's A Crime! 7 (Gang 267); St Valentine's Day Massacre*


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AAAIIEEEE
ON BOARD THE FATED SHIP...
WE GOIN' CRASH
WE GOIN' DIE...
HOH!
BWAH!
...BUT I'M SO YOUNG... I'M SO PRETTY...
BWAH!
I AIN'T WORRIT IS YOU?
NOPE! DIS NEW KING WILL SAVE US PLURPS!
HOL' ON THAR! I DON'T WANNA DIE EITHER AN' I'M MUCH PRETTIER'N YOU, SO THERE!
HO HEE!
EMERGENCY ESCAPE POD
SAVEY KING
SAVEY KING
16..... 15..... 14..... BWAH!
YOU AIN'T!
I YAM!
AIN'T
AM!
ISN'T
IS
ISN'T
IS
TAIN'T
TIS
13..... 12..... ME SCARED...
LAS' ONE IN AM A PONGY HEGG!
ME LAS'
CLANG
CLAN'T!
4..... 3..... ME WANNA CUDDLE...
CLAN'T ??
PRICKLE
BADUMF
20 MINUTES LATER AS THE DUST CLEARS...
I'M ALIVE... I'M ALIVE...
BWAH!
I LANDED ON SOMETHING SOFT AN' SQUISHY AN' I'M ALIVE...
SUDDENLY, THE EYE OF OKTUP'S PREDICTION COMES TRUE....
GAWSH! THE EYE OF OKTUPS PREDICTION HAS COME TRUE!
FREEZE! IN THE NAME OF FLASH GORDON...
FLASH GORDON?
WELL, I'M SORRY, GORDON, BUT IF THAT'S YOUR IDEA OF LOOKIN' FLASH...
QUIET!!
I WAS SHIPWRACKED HERE FIRST! THIS IS MY ASTEROID AN' I YAM THE LAW AROUND HERE...
SHORE IS...
I THINK IT'S THE GOATSKIN PANTS THAT SPOILS IT...
...AN' YOU'VE CRASHED ON A DOUBLE YELLER LINE...
HEY!
WHASSEE LOOKIN' AT?
ARGH!
LOOK OUT, GORDON, BEHIND YOU!!
HAH!
YOU CAN'T FOOL ME WITH AN OL' TRICK LIKE THAT
EH?
WHAT? WHAT??
IS IT JUS' A TRICK? IS SOMETHING HORRID BEHIND FLASH? WHAT'S SOFT AN' SQUISHY AN' SAYS "ARGH" A LOT?... NEGS MOON, EH?


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TECH NICHE

CHORDON BLEU

A diminished and inverted JON 'NORMAN' BATES stabs Simon N Goodwin in the shower – no, sorry, discovers Techtricks's computerised dictionary of chords, and previews software for the Ram Music Machine



I PROMISED that this month I'd review synchronization devices for MIDI and multitrack tape recorders.

Well . . . sorry an' all that, but the things I wanted to compare and contrast have not yet materialised at the Bates Motel. As we go to press within about two seconds of my fingers flashing (should that read 'fumbling'?) over an ageing word processor, I guess I'll have to get on the phone, engage Nag Factor 9 and encourage all the long-holiday merchants to stump up review products.

One software house that didn't leap off to spend a fortnight on the floor at Gatwick-On-Sea was Techtricks. After spending long hours working in a recording studio, the brains behind Techtricks spotted, as several other companies have, a need in the market for low-cost, effective and useful music software. Not all of us have the cash or desire to splash out on several hundred pounds' worth of 16-bit hardware and allow the Spectrum to gather dust in the corner of the studio/ bedroom.

First off Techtricks's production line is a chord computer – *Compachord*. The concept is simple. If you've ever bought sheet music of a Top 20 song, say, you will have seen above the lines the shorthand chord symbols: C7, Gdim, A6, (Z demented) and so on. Plonking your way through these is an arduous task when you need lots of chords to play the piece and you know two chords – one is C and the other one isn't!

One possible solution is to buy a chord book for either guitar or keyboard, usually called something bright like *5,000 Essential Chords*. This will frustrate you quite a lot – I know, I've tried them. There are also nice miniature chord computers with LCD; very smart and very pricy. In between these options is Techtricks's *Compachord*.

Load up and you get a keyboard display. Enter the name of the chord you want, and it appears on the screen in the form of asterisks on the correct notes. The choice of chords is very comprehensive, though not all-encompassing, and quite enough for the average player to cope with. What's more, they're quite accurate, with no clangers dropped.

Compachord will cope with major, minor, diminished, augmented, sixth, seventh and ninth chords and any crossbreed of those categories. Quite rightly, it defaults if you try to put in a chord that isn't used, such as a diminished sixth (which only exists in theory). It can invert any chord – ie rearrange the notes – through its three or four inversions, and just for kicks you can get it to run up the scale onscreen.

All in all, *Compachord* offers well over a thousand chords displayed in a very easy-to-understand fashion. I'm surprised it hasn't been done before; if it has, it didn't get into this column or any other that I can recall.

I was reviewing from the first version, and the upgrade will be available by the time you read this. This should have a guitar-chord display and sound all the notes, and will MIDI-connect with any instrument via any interface, so you can search for the right chord for your own compositions.

Compachord runs on 48/128 and is available for the reasonable sum of £8.99 (including postage and packing) from Techtricks Studio, *17 Whittington Rd, Tilgate, Crawley, West Sussex AH10 5AN.* Techtricks will be releasing several interesting MIDI programs, including MIDI delay, in the near future – look for reviews in this hallowed section.

BATTERING RAM

There must be many readers who bought the Ram Music Machine and are now eagerly awaiting the latest software from Ram/Flare. Well, there ain't gonna be any. It seems they only see profits in selling hardware and not in the upgrade software; I've also have heard mutterings that Ram's OTT ad campaign for the Music Machine (double-page full-colour ads in lots of music magazines) cost it several arms, legs and other appendages.

But fellow Tech Nicheian (what a mouthful) Simon N Goodwin (another mouthful) has already mentioned the Ram Users club and magazine run by Al Straker. This is officially sanctioned by Ram, which is only too happy to see you, the user, develop your own software. I reckon it's Ram's loss, not yours.

The club's first fruits are now available; they were on show at the ZX Microfair in August, and full reviews from me will follow. But as a taster try these two . . .

One is an eight-track MIDI real-time and step-time recorder called *Ramtrack*, £15 pounds from JB Software (nothing to do with me); the other is a rather smart £9 *Sample Editor* from Quasar Software, which goes into much greater detail than the sampling section of the Music Machine. It enables you to loop and hold samples with pretty well glitch-free results.

There are also rumours of 16-track recorders and conversion routines to make software intended for other interfaces run on the Music Machine and vice versa. You can get more info from the Ram Users' Al Straker by phoning (01) 451 5787.

Okay, that about wraps it up – next month we'll get round to synchronicity, and full reviews of the products mentioned above. In the meantime, send your enquiries to me at the usual CRASH *PO Box 10* address which is printed on every other page as it is . . .

► **Contemplating the essential harmony of the universe with Techtricks's** *Compachord*





SIMON N GOODWIN tests Pascal and Fortran 77S compilers from Mira Software, takes a first look at Romantic Robot's +3 Multiface, and controls that model train – finally

MIRA CRACK'D

FORTRAN, one of the world's first computer languages, now runs on the 48K Spectrum, thanks to Mira Software; this small Leicestershire firm has also released a British Standard version of the Pascal language. Fortran and Pascal are widely used in colleges by engineering and computing students and, as a new academic year gets under way, it seems a good time to check out these compilers.

Compilers take programs written in a form that humans can understand and translate them into machine code, the simple, fast language of the processor chip inside the computer.

As any hacker knows, the best way to learn about computing is to get lots of hands-on experience, but students often end up queueing for a small ration of time on overworked mainframes.

So even a Spectrum can help a lot if the right software is available. A few years ago I found it worthwhile to do most of my computing degree coursework on my humble Video Genie – a 48K machine with half the processing power of the Spectrum. For too long the mystique of the mainframe has led people to believe that you can't run serious languages on a small micro.

Consider the number of students and programming enthusiasts with Spectrums – Mira Software could be on to a winner if their compilers are up to scratch. After all, *Turbo Pascal*, for bigger micros, has sold half a million copies. *Mira Fortran* is unique on the Spectrum, and Hi Soft's ageing *Pascal 4T* is the only competitor of *Mira Pascal*.

MIRA FORTRAN

30 years ago Fortran was a breakthrough, the first programming language that looked anything like English. It was developed to run on an early mainframe – an IBM 704 – and some of the peculiarities of that machine have been enshrined in the language ever since.

Hundreds of better languages followed Fortran, but it built up a following and went through several versions – like the Spectrum 128, but more slowly. Even BASIC was first developed in an attempt to make it easier to teach Fortran. The name stands for FORmula TRANslation.

IBM pitched the language at mathematicians and engineers. Nowadays Fortran is outdated, but it is used in so many standard routines that advanced engineering courses usually include Fortran programming.

Mira Fortran is based on Fortran 77S, a small version of the current standard. *Mira Fortran* can also compile many programs written using older standards such as Fortran 66 and Fortran IV.

THE PACKAGE

15 quid buys you a 16-page dot-matrix-printed instruction manual, and a cassette containing two copies of the compiler and three demonstration programs.

The A5 manual is too short to do justice to the program. It covers the difference between *Mira Fortran* and Fortran 77 at breakneck pace, throwing in a few useful hints and tips, and you have to read it several times before you're really sure what's going on. If you're new to Fortran you'll need a good tutorial; Roger Kaufman's *Fortran Coloring Book*, ISBN 0-262-61026-4, is my favourite.

LAYOUT

When Fortran was invented, programs were not typed directly into the system but read from cards punched with holes to require a punched-card-reader – indicate the required commands. At least *Mira Fortran* doesn't but, like all Fortran systems, it still expects you to enter your program as if it were on a card, strictly laid out in columns.

There are three types of line in a Fortran program. Comment lines (like REMs in BASIC) start with a C or a *. Debug lines start with D. They are used during testing and you can tell the compiler to ignore them, for a finished program, or compile them, for a test run. Thus you can keep test routines in your program text, and choose whether or not to include them just before you compile.

Anything else is a normal program line. The first five characters must be spaces or digits. You can put a line number here if you like, as in a BASIC program, but lines don't have to have numbers – and the numbers don't have to be in the correct order, though obviously it helps if they are!

The sixth character on a program line is usually blank, but a + sign indicates that the line is a continuation of the previous line. *Mira Fortran* is unusually fussy in that anything else gives an error.

Individual Fortran lines have a fixed maximum length of 80 characters, and you can only put one statement on a line. Many Fortran compilers ignore the last eight characters, treating them as a comment, but Mira's program compiles the entire line. Programs must be in capital letters, apart from comments and messages. Spaces are ignored.

THE EDITOR – RUDIMENTARY?

The *Mira Fortran* editor loads from tape in about 90 seconds, and works much like the ZX BASIC editor. You type in lines character by character at the bottom of the 32-column screen; earlier entries are displayed at the top. Long lines wrap around at the edge of the display. You can move left and right in the usual way to correct mistakes in the line you're working on.

When you press ENTER the syntax of the line is checked. If all is well *Mira Fortran* asks for the next line; otherwise you must correct the mistake at the place shown before you can continue.

You stop entering lines by pressing the ↓ key. This gives you access to a set of single-letter commands to edit lines or scan up and down the program, line by line or in eight-line steps – much as in BASIC. Fortran text can be loaded, merged and saved on cassette. The H key calls up a list of commands.

You can list the file to stream 3, usually a ZX printer or Centronics interface, but you must print the whole lot. There's a block delete command to get rid of several lines, but no way to copy a block without deleting the original. This editor is rather rudimentary, but few people will prefer a card punch.

COMMANDS

Mira Fortran recognises most of Fortran 77; the biggest restriction is probably the absence of COMPLEX and DOUBLE data types. Decimal values use the Spectrum's default precision of about nine digits, and integers are limited to the range -32768 to +32767. Logical (true or false) values are packed into single bits to save space.

Memory permitting, you can declare arrays of any number of dimensions. Variable space can be shared, using COMMON and EQUIVALENCE. DATA statements let you preset variable values.

Maths functions include logarithms, type conversions, trigonometric and hyperbolic functions, things like MOD (to find the remainder after division) and a job lot of MIN and MAX functions to pick out the biggest or smallest of several values.

All the usual numerical comparisons and logical operators are allowed, but *Mira Fortran* lacks routines to handle characters – you can't slice strings or stick them together.

Program control facilities are very rudimentary. The DO loop is similar to FOR..NEXT in ZX BASIC, and there are three kinds of IF test, including Fortran 77's multiline IF..THEN..ELSE.

Functions and subroutines can be defined and called with any type of parameter. Built-in subroutines mimic BASIC's ARC, BEEP, CIRCLE, DRAW and PLOT commands, but you must write your own POINT function if you need it. The only way to control attributes like INK, PAPER, OVER and so on is to print the appropriate control codes; this isn't mentioned in the manual.

For a long time Fortran led the way in its range of output-formatting facilities, and *Mira Fortran* reflects this. The syntax is horrible, but that's Fortran; however, the facilities are pretty good, and there's a nonstandard PRINT command which you can use if you don't want to bother with the bells and whistles of Fortran's WRITE. *Mira Fortran* imposes some minor restrictions on FORMAT statements, but all but the most obscure programs should compile without trouble.

You can't use cassette data files, but you can read and write disk and microdrive files from a Fortran program. The trick is to open the files from BASIC, and then use the appropriate stream number from inside the Fortran program. You can read or write files from the start, but you can't use random access to move back and forth.

END can be used to check for the end of a file in a READ statement, but the check has an unusual syntax and only works on files which are read a line at a time.

COMPILING FORTRAN

When your program is complete the X key starts the compiler. Before it generates machine code, *Mira Fortran* scans the whole program at a rate of about 16 lines a second, looking for mistakes that could not be spotted on a line-by-line basis, such as missing ENDs or mistyped names. If a mistake is found one of 15 rather general error messages appears: for instance, an absent END produces the unhelpful message 'Wrong statement order'.

When an error has been found the appropriate line is marked with a flashing question mark and you are thrown back into the editor. When all the errors have been fixed the computer beeps and the screen shows a mess of dots and lines. This appears because the compiler uses screen memory to hold details of the names in the program. In this way, the size of program you can compile is increased.

The next step is to load the second part of the system, which actually performs the machine-code translation. The translator takes a minute to load, and then it scans through the program at about 30 lines a second, generating machine code. When it has finished it displays a list of numbers: the code address, length, place to CLEAR before running and, for no apparent reason, the address of the program's COMMON storage area.

As soon as you press a key – by accident or deliberately – the information vanishes and the machine resets, leaving the code at the top of memory.

This two-step approach allows you to compile programs of several hundred lines on a small machine, but it makes *Mira Fortran* a drag to use; you must reload the editor and translator every time you compile a program. This is not too bad if you've got a disk or microdrive, especially if you save the program and editor together with a 'magic button' utility, but it is very frustrating on a cassette system.

PERFORMANCE

Compiled Fortran runs without the compiler loaded. You start programs with RAND USR 63500. They are always at least 5K long, because they load a library of utility routines at the top of memory. The code is not particularly concise – the programs I tried used about 50 bytes per line.

Integer arithmetic proved to be fast – between 30 and 100 times quicker than BASIC and similar in speed to *Mcoder* and Softek's IS integer BASIC compilers. You can only break into compiled Fortran when SCROLL? is displayed.

Floating-point number-crunching was not very fast. One demonstration routine searched for prime numbers, digging them out at a rate of about two a second. The method proved to be very inefficient, but the compiled code was only about twice as fast as equivalent ZX BASIC, or a fifth quicker than BASIC compiled with Mcoder 3.

Mira Fortran can't always detect errors in FORMAT statements. One incorrect program compiled without a squeak, but locked up the machine when I ran it. And it took a while to fix, because there was no hint of the position of the error. In the end I kept loading and recompiling the program with extra PRINT statements till I zeroed in on the fault.

THE VERDICT – USEFUL BUT LIMITED

Mira has produced a real Fortran compiler for the Spectrum. Unfortunately *Mira Fortran* is not particularly friendly. It lacks some of the features you'd expect on a larger system – like a run-time debugger and linker – but it is still a useful package for compiling fairly small, independent Fortran programs.

MIRA PASCAL

Mira Pascal has many of the features of *Mira Fortran* and it too costs £15, but it has been produced more recently and has fewer rough edges. It's a complete, modern version of Pascal. Mira Software says that the microdrive version complies with Level 1 of British Standard 6192.

Like the Fortran compiler, *Mira Pascal* is supplied on cassette. The A4 instruction manual is only 12 pages long but it is better organised and easier to use then the Fortran manual. If you already know the standard and can puzzle out the rather technical error reports you should not need any other information; otherwise you'll need a tutorial. The manual recommends a book that deals specifically with British Standard 6192.

The tape has three different versions of the compiler. The cassette version allows about 22K of memory for program text; the microdrive version is a little larger, and both leave about 1800 bytes unused at the top of memory in case you need to load a printer-driver there. Then there's a condensed tape version which allows an extra 3K of program. It loads at the very top of memory, has no help page and uses numbers rather than text to report errors.

Pascal is a very different language from Fortran. It was invented in the late Sixties by a Swiss computing professor, Niklaus Wirth (and named after the 17th-century French mathematician Blaise Pascal); it was designed both to be easy to compile and to learn, and to encourage systematic – structured – programming. This is a style of coding that makes programs easy to read and to modify.

There are usually two stages in the development of a program. First you make it up; then you make it work. Pascal forces you to think before you start coding: it reduces the amount of time you spend debugging, because to use Pascal effectively you have to make plans first.

This is good discipline for professional programmers, because it is almost impossible to write big programs that work unless you plan them carefully from the start. Pascal has a bad name with some hackers because it's not suitable for bodging small programs together quickly.

PASCAL EDITOR

Mira Pascal uses an editor similar to the one supplied with the Fortran compiler, with all its commands and more besides. Now you can move directly to the start or end of the text, duplicate blocks as well as move them, and load and save files on microdrive as well as on cassette. (The manual tells you to use key S to save to microdrive, but it should say D.)

You can compile text files created by a word-processing system such as *Tasword 3*, but, sadly, you can't load Pascal files into the word processor.

All the usual features of Pascal are included: *Mira Pascal* works with characters, Boolean (true or false) values, integers +/-32767, nine-digit floating-point numbers and subranges, packed into single bytes when possible.

Data structures are the strong point of Pascal, and *Mira Pascal* works with conformant arrays, variant records, pointers and sets of any size. DISPOSE can only reclaim the space used by the most recent dynamic variable allocated, so programs that make heavy use of pointers may run out of memory after a while.

Besides standard functions and procedures *Mira Pascal* supports BEEP and the drawing commands and maths functions of ZX BASIC. USR lets you call machine code but does not return a value. Once again POINT is missing, and INK and OVER must be set by printing control codes.

Characters do not appear by default on the screen when they are read from the keyboard. If you want to be able to see and edit your input you must call the procedure EDITOR before using READ or READLN. (This worked well for me except when I typed a blank line – then subsequent input was invisible!)

Mira Pascal can use files opened from BASIC, as can *Mira Fortran*. It also supports temporary files which automatically disappear when you leave the block of code that created them. Unlike *Mira Fortran*, the Pascal compiler lets you RESET and REWRITE files, and check EOF as normal.

The microdrive version of *Mira Pascal* automatically saves your program when you start the compiler and reloads it when you run the editor. Apart from this, the compiler works in two steps, like *Mira Fortran*. It displays one number after a compilation – the address to CLEAR – just before the compiled code. This number is also printed out, if you have a printer connected.

GOOD PERFORMANCE

When I tested the compiler, the speed and size of *Mira Pascal* code proved to be similar to that of *Mira Fortran*. Integer-handling was again impressive, but floating-point maths was only two or three times faster than ZX BASIC. The compiler worked very quickly, each step processing between 20 and 30 lines per second.

Mira Pascal comes with three demonstration programs. The first searches for all the prime numbers between 1 and 32767, using a sieve method much more efficient than the corresponding Fortran demo. It took 40 seconds to run, and I was able to reduce that to 15 seconds by making minor changes to the listing.

The second demo computes and displays three-dimensional graphs, clipped to fit a box on the screen. It worked quickly and well.

Last on the tape is a well-written spelling-checker. This comes with a dictionary of just 800 words, expandable to 2,000, but it is a fine illustration of the way *Mira Pascal* can be used to develop sophisticated programs.

I like *Mira Pascal* – it is a valuable addition to the Spectrum programmer's armoury, especially if your microdrives are in working order! It should give *Hi Soft Pascal* some serious competition.

Mira Software is at *24 Home Close, Kibworth, Leicestershire LE8 0TJ.*

CORRECTION – SCREEN$ HANDLING

THERE WAS a serious subediting mistake in last month's article headed POP-UP SCREEN, at the end of the first column on page 86. 'The number of the page moved' should have read 'The number of pages moved' . . . !



► Doing the +3 a favour: Romantic Robot's Multiface Three

NEW HOPE FOR THE +3

THE FUTURE of the Spectrum +3 is looking brighter now that Romantic Robot has produced the Multiface Three, with which you can transfer cassette programs for the Spectrum + and 128 onto disk.

The £44.95 Multiface Three is, in effect, a set of utility programs that you can run any time without disturbing loaded programs. The standard program (in ROM) lets you save screens – or the entire program memory – to disk or tape.

You can also type in POKEs to change the operation of games.

And a Multiface contains RAM as well as ROM, so you can load all sorts of utilities into the space – the *Gamester* infinite-lives trick reviewed in Issue 41, for instance, or *Genie*, a friendly machine-code disassembler.

These utilities are the first in a growing market which is increasing the flexibility of the 'custom' Spectrum. Like IBM PC-users, Spectrum-owners are learning the value of a sidekick.

The Multiface Three also includes two new routines to print screens at any time through the +3's printer port.

To make space for new files, you can suspend programs and format a disk at any time, or look through the disk directory and erase unwanted files. Disk files are usually saved in a compressed form and automatically expanded upon reloading, which should help the Multiface Three fit more than one game on a disk. (Each Amstrad disk holds just 173K, but most current 128 games leave lots of memory unused.)

Packing the entire memory into a single code file also helps the Multiface Three save room on the disk and increase loading speed.

Romantic Robot has done Amstrad a big favour by producing an add-on that makes the +3 worth considering. But even if the +3 comes down to £199, with the Multiface Three at £45 you'd be well-advised to check out other disk systems with 'magic buttons', such as the Swift Disc (reviewed here last month) and the Disciple (which Franco Frey reviewed in Issue 38).

And there are a few problems lurking: the Multiface Three may not operate with software produced specifically for the +3, for instance. Still, the prototype I tested works pretty well – and there'll be a more detailed report soon.

WE'RE GETTING THERE

ADAM SHEPPARD wants to know if it's possible to control a model train from a Spectrum. It is – but it's not easy, and you'll need a good knowledge of programming and digital electronics.

First, you must find an input/output port for the Spectrum. A Centronics parallel printer port might be good enough, if you can discover the port addresses and wiring assignments – otherwise you'll need a purpose-designed interface for experimenters.

Maplin (tel: Southend-On-Sea (0702) 552911) has a Spectrum I/O Controller on page 264 of its current catalogue. You'll also need the parallel-port kit on the same page, so the whole lot will cost £35-40. Electronic And Computer Workshop (tel: Chelmsford (0245) 262149) sells a similar system. I haven't used either product, so I can't vouch for them.

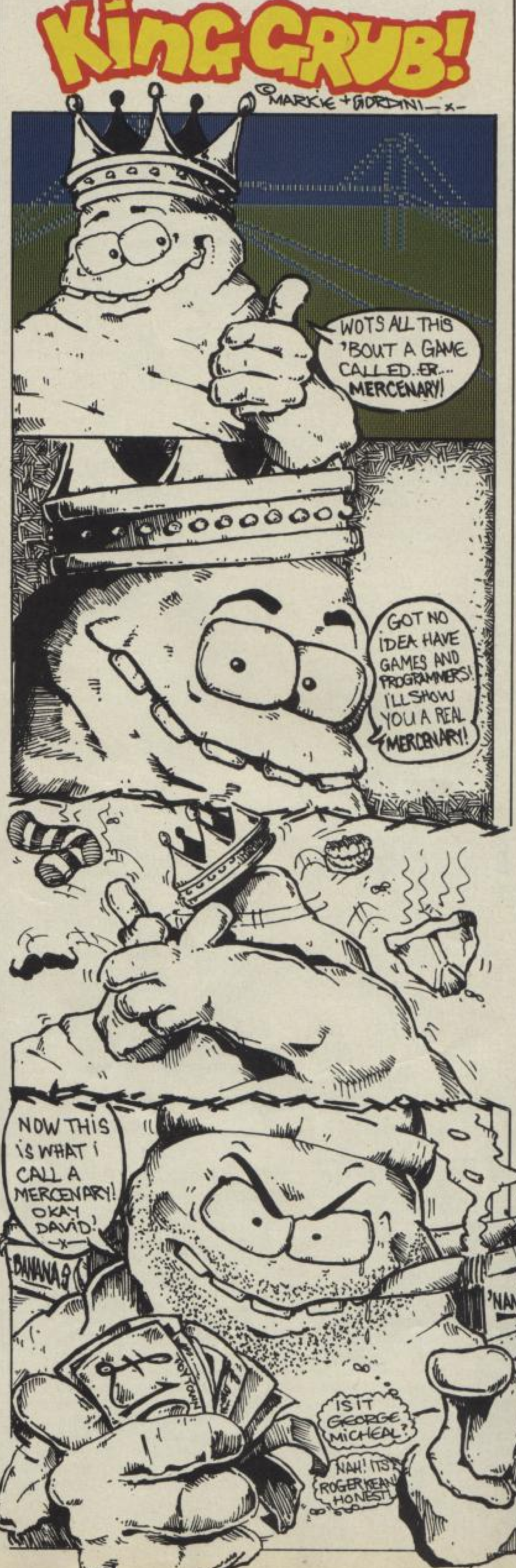
You could design and build your own controller for about £10, but you'd need to know all about digital electronics and Z80 addressing. If you don't know roughly how to do this already I'd advise you not to try unless you can find someone more knowledgeable to help you.

A controller just lets you set and test digital signals outside the computer. You must write appropriate software, and build extra electronics to interface the controller to sensors and power controls for the railway.

Babini has just published a slim £2.95 paperback of suitable circuits, together with a clear and sensible discussion of the problems involved. *Electronic Circuits For The Control of Model Railways*, ISBN 0-85934-154-2, is written by the prolific R A Penfold. The book assumes you're wiring things up to the user port of a BBC Micro, but a Spectrum port works in much the same way.

If you've got a Tech Tip that deserves a wider airing – or a technical query – please write in with the details. The address is, as ever:

Simon N Goodwin, Tech Tips, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*




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RAPID FIRE

Producer: **Mastertronic**
Retail price: **£2.99**
Authors: **Icon Design**

The crime of the month, if not the century, is under way – criminals have made their headquarters in a deserted warehouse and filled it with computer equipment, and they're ready to paralyse the electronic security systems of four victim banks.

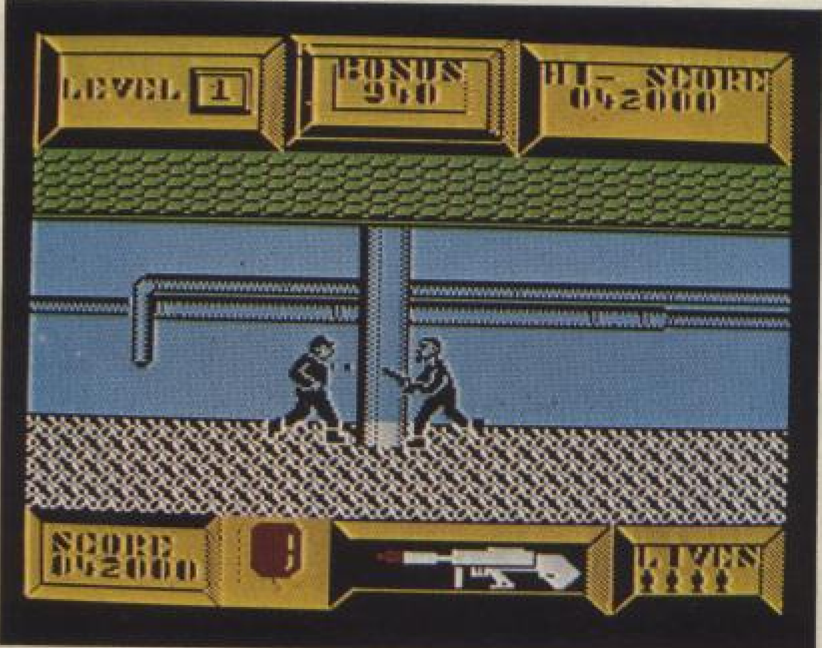
There's only one solution, so your police superiors have ordered you to destroy the warehouse and all the equipment it contains.

To do this, four plasma computers must be deactivated. The active (red) rotating plasma vent in each computer is its Achilles' heel, and should be taken out by a well-directed shot.

But the computers are protected by a swarm of desperate criminals who just don't like an undercover cop that much. You carry a gun for protection against these evil rapscallions and their grenades and missiles (but be careful – while you're busily gathering points, the gun can overheat).

After taking out the plasma computers, you can enter the master level of the warehouse hideout, thus setting off a chain reaction in the central power electrode and foiling the bank robbers' plans for good.

► *Rapid Fire* – **more a kind of feeble blast**



CRITICISM

● " I'm sick of all these 'shoot every person in sight' games – they were only appealing for a short while, and now they're very tedious and boring affairs. *Rapid Fire* is the epitome of everything bad about this genre. It has absolutely no content, and it seems pointless going around blasting every single thing that moves. I'm not a pacifist, but all this violence makes me sick. "
PAUL **27%**



● " Rapid Fire **is a highly boring, unaddictive shoot-'em-up. The graphics look like they were made in ten minutes on a Friday afternoon (some of the enemies' weapons are like black lemons, and your own machine gun is a**

FOOTBALL DIRECTOR

Producer: **D&H Games**
Retail price: **£8.95**
Authors: **John De Salis and Tony Huggard**

Wheel and deal in the football world, matching the cut and thrust on the pitch with the Machiavellian intrigues that lurk in the boardrooms of big-time sport.

As a team manager, you appoint coaches, physiotherapists and scouts, make bids for stars and sell declining players to raise money.

Matches are automatically played between your team and the other sides in your league. After full time a final score is shown, complete with scoring players and score times. The results of other matches in your league are also shown, and with each completed set of fixtures the ever-changing league table showing your position can be called up.

You can also get an update on your squad, telling you the number of goals it's scored and conceded, the number of games it's played, and whether it's carrying any injuries.

Just as important, of course, is an accurate statement of your financial condition. If your bank balance isn't enough to support all your deals, you can arrange loans, overdrafts and mortgages, or sell shares in your club to cover your financial shortfall.

Remember the bread-and-butter expenses that are incurred every week, such as wage bills and general running costs. Regular income to offset these includes gate money, interest payments from the bank and TV broadcast fees.

There's an active transfer market in which you can boost a flagging team by buying the best players – or raise money by selling them. Bids can fail, though, leaving you intensely disappointed when you're unable to persuade your favoured player to come to *you* instead of plumping for the exciting football adventure that is Grimsby Town.

Out of all your transfer dealings the government takes a third of the fee, and it takes 15% of any gambling wins you make.

At the end of the season, if not before, your financial decisions can break or make the club you run. So poverty or riches, glory or bust may await you just round the corner . . .

CRITICISM

● " *Football Director* tries to dominate the Spectrum football market and bury the rival *Football Manager* for good. It fails dismally. *Football Director* holds all the features (not attractions) of the old favourite – slow responses, no graphics, glaring colour. And the inlay is extremely uninformative. *Football Director* is a slow and poor imitation of a very overrated predecessor. The high price is ten times more surprising than the game. "
PAUL **11%**

● " Football Director **is the worst game I've seen for months, and**

► **All the world's a football pitch in D&H Games's sports-management simulation**





simple stick) and the animation is pathetic. The only decent thing about Rapid Fire **is the loading screen, so there's nothing worth buying here. "**
NICK **40%**

● " *This is the kind of primitive junk I'd have expected from a budget label a couple of years ago. The gameplay is extremely limited, so there's virtually no playability. And the graphics are horribly flickery, with unconvincing animation of the main character – though the characters are nicely detailed. I doubt* Rapid Fire *will appeal to many; it certainly left me cold.* "
BEN **30%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: poor and badly-defined
Sound: squidgy explosions
General rating: a very inferior shoot-'em-up with little playability

Presentation	52%
Graphics	46%
Playability	27%
Addictive qualities	25%
OVERALL	**32%**

it's worse than Football Manager. **The colour is unattractive, and the black-on-white text could become hard on the eyes – if anyone has the patience/lack of intelligence required to play** Football Director **for more than half an hour. "**
MIKE **8%**

● " *Get ready, all you intellectuals out there – you'll need an O level in Football Studies just to load this up! Like the other football management games,* Football Director *is text-only and very boring. You can choose what to call the players and the teams, but that doesn't brighten up this drab simulation.* "
NICK **19%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: none
Graphics: text-only game; ugly colour
Sound: minimal FX
General rating: a poor and expensive substitute for Addictive's *Football Manager* (well-received in CRASH Issue Four)

Presentation	24%
Playability	16%
Addictive qualities	16%
OVERALL	**13%**

SAMURAI TRILOGY

Producer: **Gremlin Graphics**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Gremlin Graphics in-house**

You are one of a select band of fighting warriors attempting to become a Samurai War Lord in this martial-arts simulation (see Run It Again this issue for all the others!).

To prove you worthy of the title, your fighting and mental skills must be tested in three Oriental disciplines: karate, kendo (a form of fencing) and samurai. In each of these techniques you need to overcome an acknowledged master – such as the terrifying Ta Ling, who catches cobras and makes stew from their remains to increase his fitness.

Each opponent has a favourite means of attack; he might rely upon strength, speed or skill, and you must respond with the best defensive strategy. For instance, your speed might neutralize his strength, or your skill might help you beat a very fast opponent. The choice is yours. You can also choose the skill level of your opponent; the better he is, the more points you'll earn if you emerge the victor.

Preparation is essential before every contest, to improve your abilities through circuit and weight training, running, isometrics, breathing, brick-breaking, sparring and meditation.

After each phase of combat, attack and defence tactics must be chosen by allocating five points among four key attributes: skill, stamina, strength and speed. An unsuccessful defence strategy or wasteful attacking can diminish you in all four areas, but wise fighting and sound training can earn you extra attack strength from the watching Supreme Master Chu Yu.

After the first rounds of karate and kendo you may meditate or change tactics – but during samurai the action is continuous, and you must defeat four opponents as you fight to the death to become a Samurai War Lord.



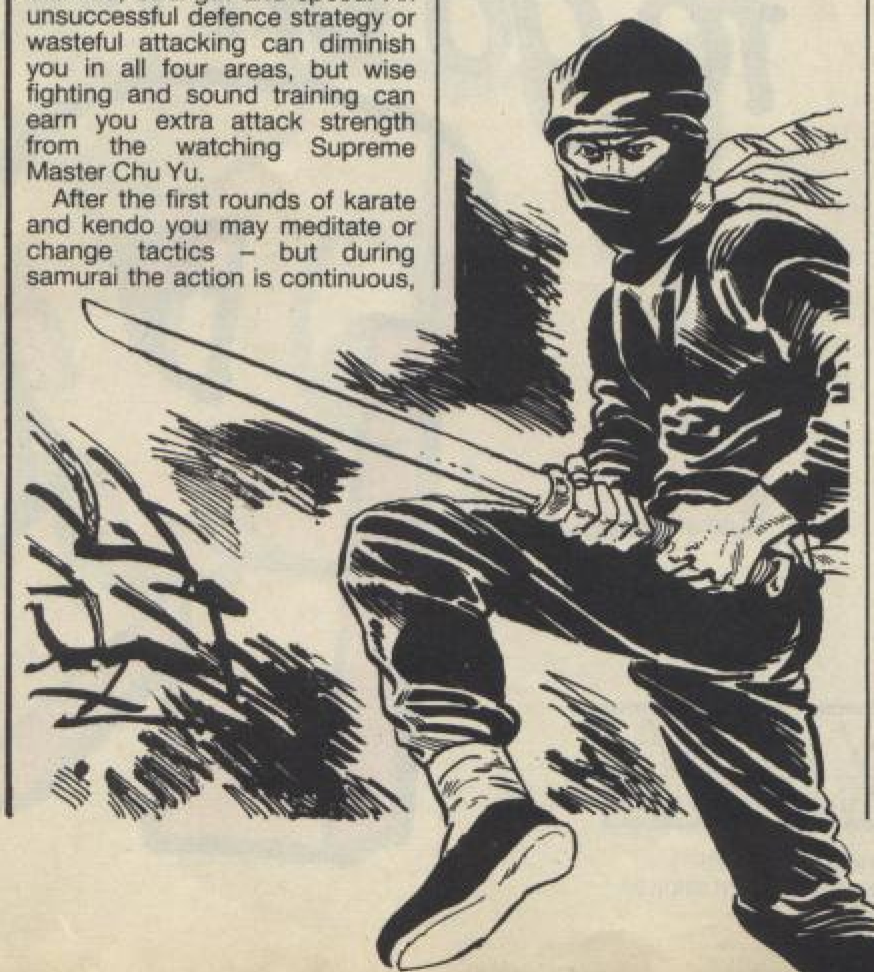
► **The way of the rude hand signals:** *Samurai Trilogy*

CRITICISM

● " Gremlin's first martial-arts simulations had a strong atmosphere, usually created by lifelike graphics and effective sound. But both are absent from this latest (and hopefully last, if they keep coming like this . . .) wireframe slant-eyed game. The graphical presentation is hopeless – it's obvious that more time has been spent on the character set than on designing the game. The moves are quite easy to carry out, but they all look the same. It's all a bit old hat. "
PAUL **41%**

● " Samurai Trilogy **is simply three** Way Of The Exploding Fist**-type games on one tape. The graphics aren't anything to shout about, and when your warrior jumps over the background his head changes colour! This is just another run-of-the-mill martial-arts game. "**
NICK **65%**

● " *This is one of the worst beat-'em-ups around. The graphics are poor, and there's not much playability or addictivity –* Samurai Trilogy *seems like nothing more than a program put together hastily to satisfy orders. The character set is nice, though.* "
MIKE **41%**



COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: well-defined characters against a simple background
Sound: no tune, a few spot FX
Options: playable in four languages; opponent's skill definable; joystick control only (no keys)
General rating: a lacklustre martial-arts simulation

Presentation	63%
Graphics	50%
Playability	48%
Addictive qualities	47%
OVERALL	**49%**

πr^2

Producer: **Mind Games**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Binary Design**

You know what it's like – faced with a tense situation, your mind goes blank, you can't think of anything, and you feel like the thickest person. Oh sorry, you're like that all the time? Well, Professor Storm isn't, but he's desperate to collect all his intellectual thoughts and put them firmly under control.

And to do that he must travel through his own mind, which is made up of interlocking cogs; Storm can travel either clockwise or anticlockwise on their rims. Travelling with a cog's motion increases the prof's speed, while movement against it slows him. If Storm just stops walking, he moves at the same speed as the rim.

All this rotating is to help our eggheaded hero reconstruct the scientific formulae he once knew; when he completes one revolution on a wheel rim Storm picks up part of a formula, but only by collecting all the parts in the correct order can he move to the next level and the next piece of disassembled knowledge. (The required forumla is displayed at the beginning of each level.)

Storm's otherwise routine task is hindered by stray, distracting thoughts. Some journey predictably on the cogwheel's rims, but others switch randomly from rim to rim, or even home in on the poor befuddled man. If these touch the dear professor they can reduce him to a moron – so keep a check on Storm's IQ. If it falls to zero, he loses one of his five scholarly lives.

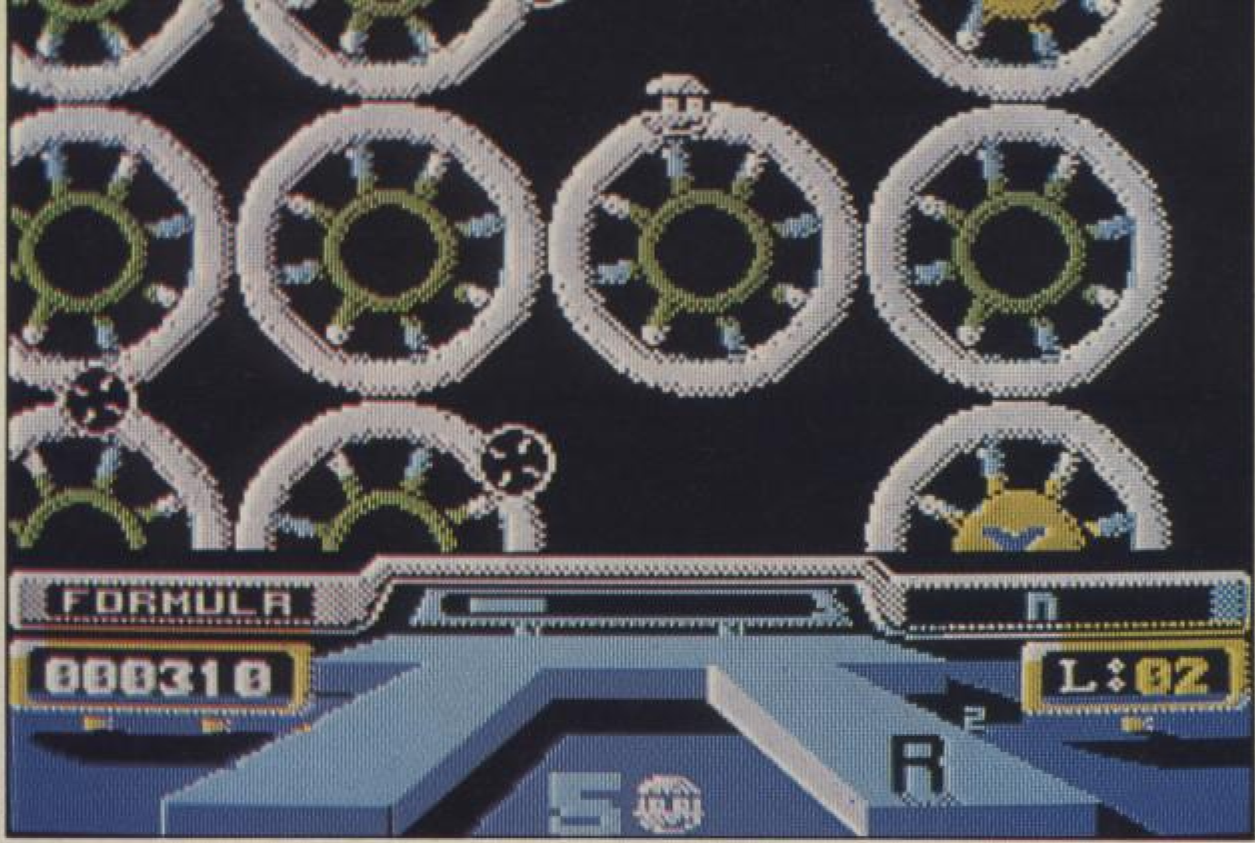
Some wheels have fond memories or abstract thoughts at the centre, and they can

MARK

" After a few games I started to enjoy swinging from cog to cog and saving the poor old professor from a very embarrassing situation. Graphically πr^2 is nothing startling, but it's competent and quite playable. "

53%





▶ That's you on the centre cog, looking for the vital formula in πr SQUARED



NICK

" If you're trying to forget all that maths homework you haven't done, avoid this one! The central character looks like a cross between Bobby Bearing and a baked bean and the scrolling is terrible. The idea is simple, and so are the graphics – but their presentation and the different formulae to work on make it highly addictive. πr^2 is a brilliant little game. "

69%

PAUL

" This latest Mind Games extravaganza certainly taxes the old grey matter as well as requiring some lightning reflexes. πr^2 has all the appeal of Think!. The concept is amazingly simple and straightforward, but each level is ridden with a fiendishly constructed array of wheels. And there are some vicious stray thoughts, making planning essential. It might be a bit expensive – but there are mounds of addictivity in πr^2, and it's definitely worth fiddling with. "

77%

temporarily paralyse him Storm or take down his intelligence.

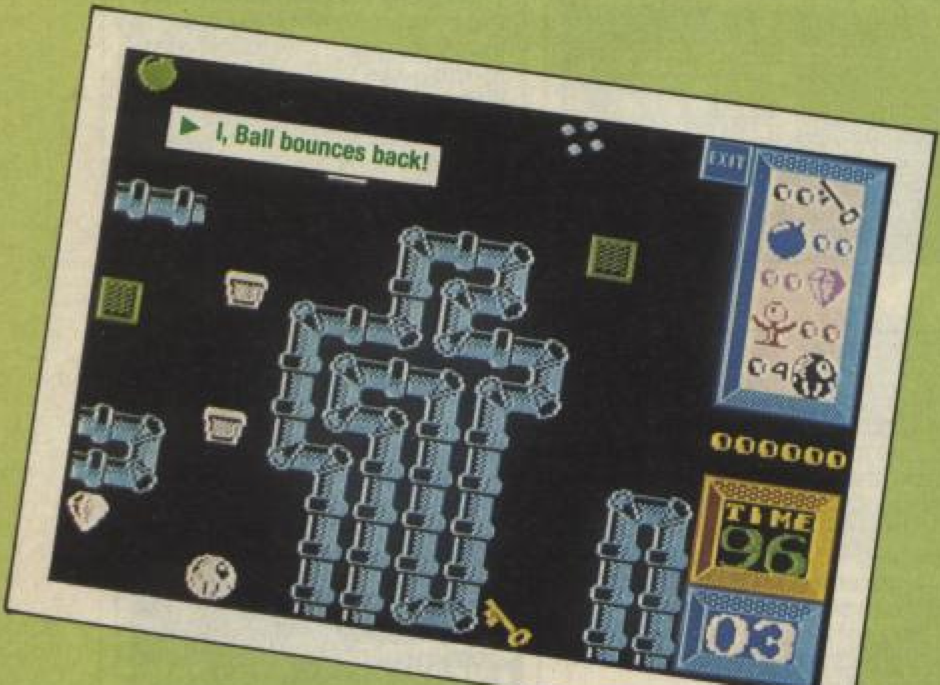
But to help him in his rotating task the professor can collect other objects from the centres of the cogs: a book raises his flagging IQ, a calculator speeds up his movement on a rim, a hammer lets him swat a stray thought, and if the prof finds a trash can he can dump in parts of a formula in the incorrect order.

COMMENTS

Joysticks: none
Graphics: simple but effective
Sound: tune and spot FX
Options: definable keys
General rating: an enjoyable and fast-moving puzzle game

Presentation	63%
Graphics	56%
Playability	66%
Addictive qualities	68%
OVERALL	**70%**

I•, B•A•L•L 2



► I, Ball bounces back!

After his bouncing conquest of the evil Terry Ball in Firebird's CRASH Smash *I, Ball* (Issue 39), the bulbous I, Ball is sent down deep mines to investigate the history of the Balls (a race of multicoloured, well, balls).

I, Ball jumps and bounces through this subterranean maze of antiquity. The flame-thrower he carries must stand him in good stead against the hordes of rotating blocks, spinning squares and descending cubes that seek to do our rotund hero down; I, Ball can earn clusters of points by destroying these geometrical muggers before they take his five lives.

There are 50 screens through which I, Ball must work his way – by finding a key in each screen and getting to the exit with it, within a time limit. And as he progresses I, Ball should gather valuable historic artefacts by bundling his globular form into them.

> "I, Ball 2 is the most frustrating game I've ever played – the screen layout gives you minimum manoeuvrability! But the special FX are fantastic, with loads of speech, crumbling rocks, and masses of nasties. Colour is used extremely well, too, and the graphics are superbly well-defined. Considering that the idea of I, Ball 2 is so simple it's amazingly addictive and compelling."
>
> **NICK** **90%**

> "I, Ball 2 is a very playable leap-around-and-blast-everything-in-sight collect-'em-up. Graphically it's great, with a cheerful-looking little bouncing ball sproinging around nicely-drawn backdrops. There are plenty of nasties trying to stop him – and for many games they will succeed admirably . . ."
>
> **MARK** **87%**

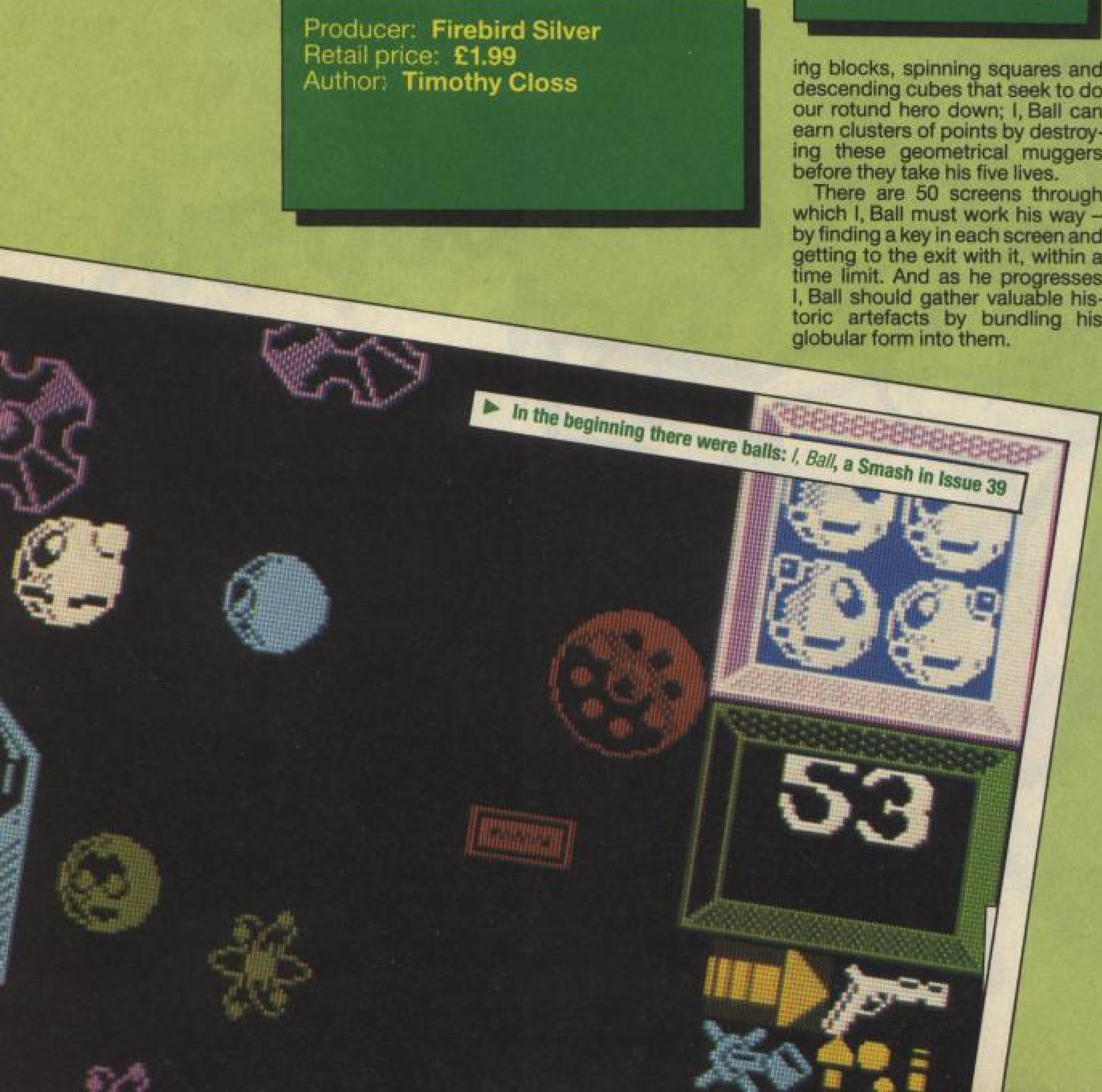
But each mine has its own peculiarities and characteristics, which I, Ball must discover and use to his advantage . . .

I, Ball can pick up extra lives, weapons and so on as he moves through this strange world; points' are awarded for such kleptomania. Power Stones have the strangest of properties – they can boost power, slow opponents in a power warp, or increase a leap.

> "I, Ball 2 is a really excellent game. The graphics are smooth and fast, though they're not very exciting, and the gameplay is challenging and fun. The sound is superb: the title tune isn't exactly Mozart, but the in-game effects and the speech are really good, ranking next to the original I, Ball. This is a great game – and it's budget too!"
>
> **MIKE** **93%**

When this roly-poly explorer has advanced through five mines, he is treated to the sight of a priceless object, made in the youth of his race. And when I, Ball has gathered ten such objects his task is complete and he can once more be fêted as a hero.

Producer: **Firebird Silver**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Author: **Timothy Closs**

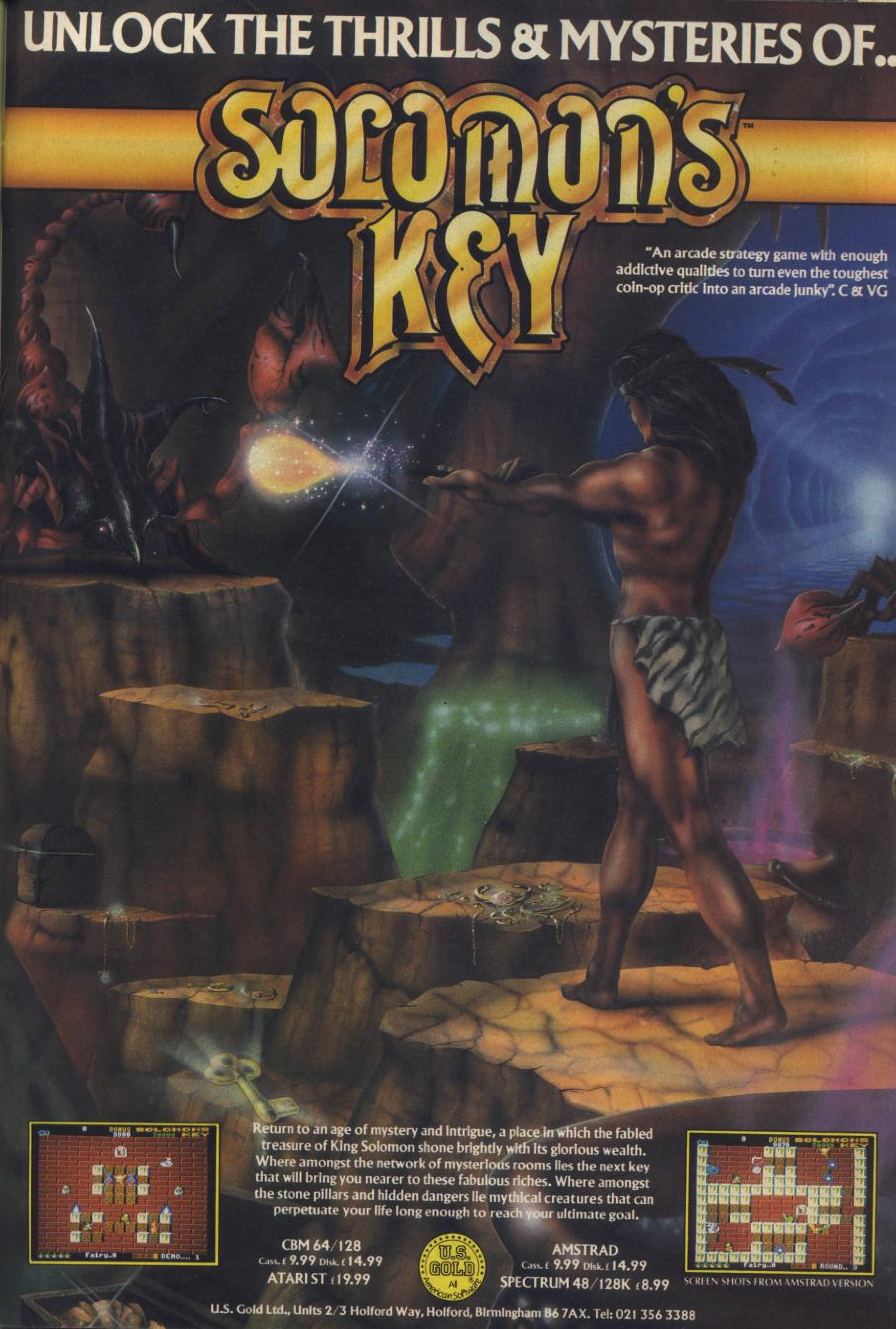


► In the beginning there were balls: *I, Ball*, a Smash in Issue 39

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: well-drawn, well-animated cute characters
Sound: magnificent speech but weak tune
General rating: a very successful follow-up to *I, Ball*

Presentation	86%
Graphics	83%
Playability	89%
Addictive qualities	89%
OVERALL	**90%**


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DEATH WISH 3

Producer: **Gremlin Graphics**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Gremlin Graphics in-house**

In *Death Wish* he killed a few punks, in *Death Wish 2* he killed a few more . . . but in this *Death Wish 3* film licence, street vigilante Paul Kersey is out to slaughter the world. Well, perhaps not the world, but certainly a lot of the bums and street vermin who skulk in the streets of New York.

Kersey patrols a 3-D construction of the Big Apple's streets. Using compass and map, he can pinpoint the punks he's searching for – and find the weapons he needs to wipe them out.

With a Magnum, a pump-action shotgun, a machine gun and a rocket launcher clanking in his bulging pockets, our hero begins his cleanup campaign, using each weapon till its magazine is empty. When he's finally weaponless, Kersey gives a resigned shrug and must go in search of protection.

But he isn't alone in his fight against the forces of evil – the boys in blue are on his side, supplying information on where riots are breaking out in the violent city centre.

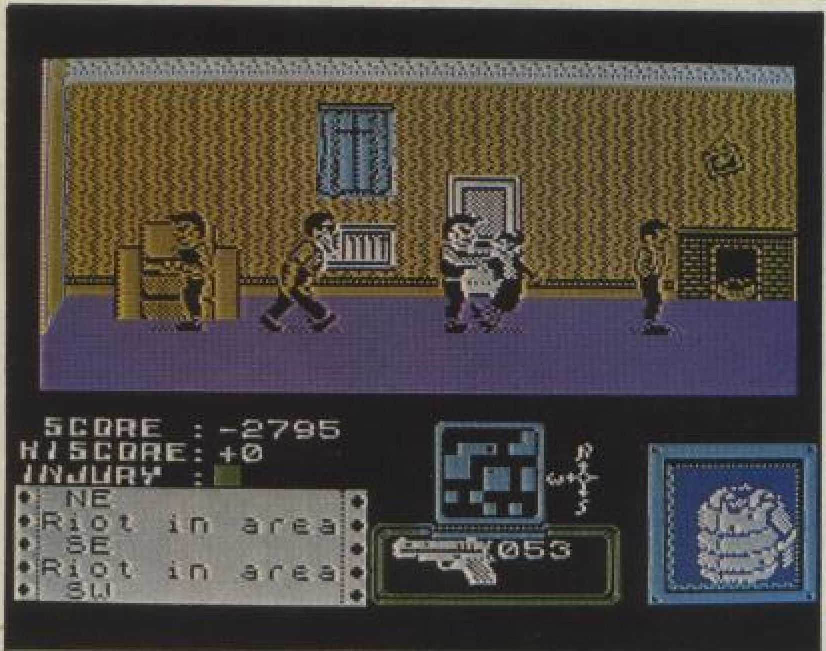
As Kersey, you earn points for each piece of New York low life rubbed out. But take care – these gang warriors sure ain't boy scouts, and they're armed with guns and clubs.

And though our vigilante has a heavy bulletproof vest chafing at his chest, it can only take so much. Wear and tear on this protective undergarment is shown by an icon, and a bar indicates how seriously Kersey is injured.

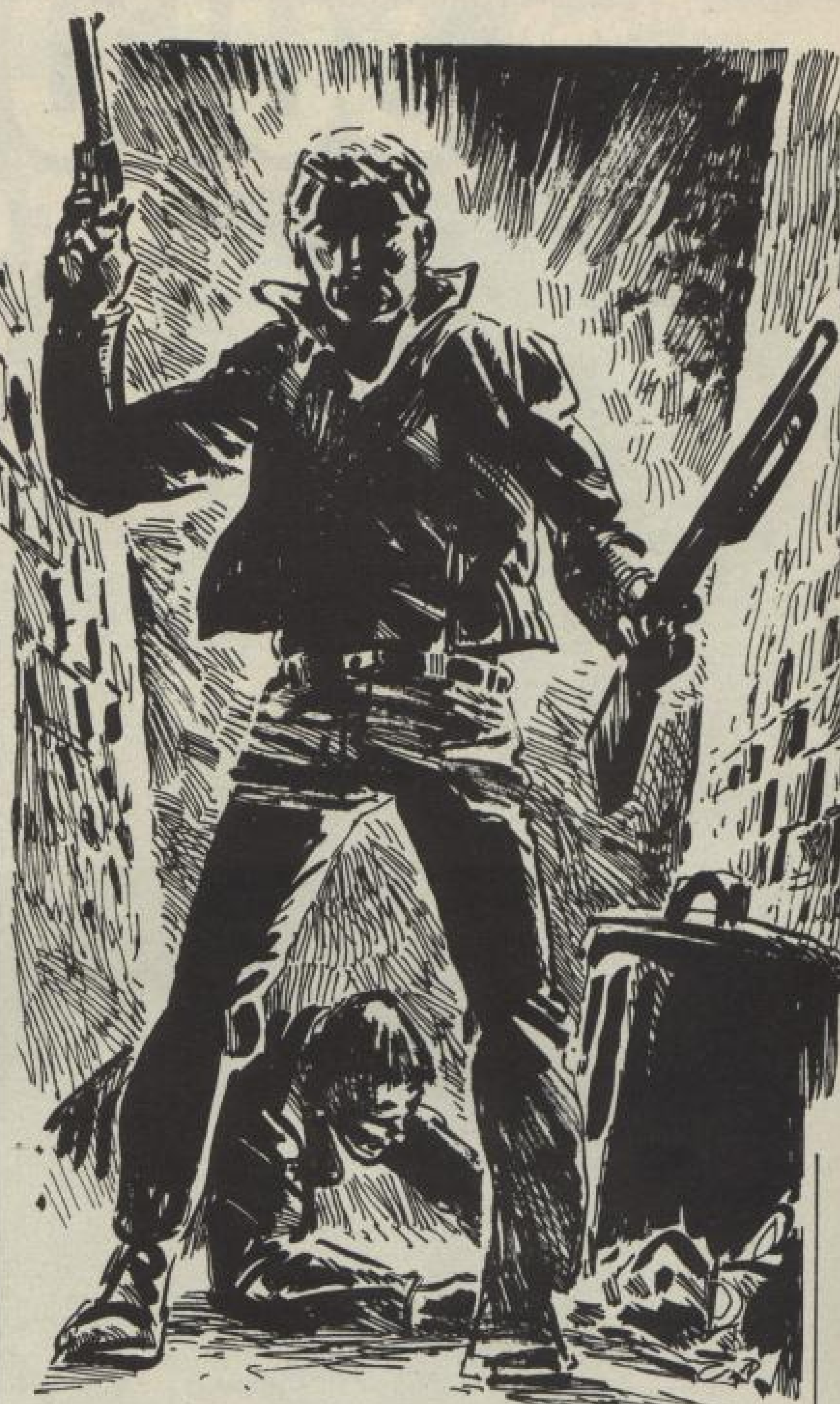
It may be a jungle out there, but our Charles Bronson lookalike can find a brief respite by hiding in run-down tenement rooms. Once inside he can sneak a peek through windows, and fire shots into that mad, mad world out there. Plugging a creep from this position earns you higher points – but be on guard for surprise attacks from behind.

Points are lost if you mow down one of New York's helpless law-abiding inhabitants, and the cops are bound to get a little irritated if Kersey bumps off too many of their men.

And just so too many corpses don't lie rotting on the pavement, medics dash on to drag the odd cadaver away – and Kersey certainly keeps them busy.



► **Paul Kersey turns his back while some little ol' granny gets duffed – this is no way to carry out** *Death Wish 3*



CRITICISM

● " The graphics are good, with brilliant characters, but the gameplay and the way Bronson moves are poor. It seems the object is to destroy *any* moving object – and killing someone with a rocket launcher is a mite barbaric, reducing them to just a pile of dust! There are some neat touches, such as the ladies of the night walking about, tempting you, and the way you can shoot out of windows. *Death Wish 3* is graphically attractive, but it won't appeal for long – especially as you can't turn off the irritating tune. "
NICK **54%**

● **" There's been too much attention paid to the sicker parts of** Death Wish 3 **– the gore left by a bazooka blast, the realistic twitching of the characters when they're hit by a volley of shots – at the expense of the game. Navigating the angular streets and the mazelike interior of the buildings isn't easy, even after an awful lot of practice, and this might put off beginners. And getting duffed up is pretty tedious; if more than one baddie has a go it can take a long time and a huge amount of energy to get away, which often costs you the game. I can't recommend** Death Wish 3. **"**
BEN **34%**

● *" Death Wish 3 is dull. The mindless carnage might appeal to real sadists – but it gets tedious. The title tune isn't bad, but though the graphics and characters are quite clear, they're unattractive. Despite its image, this can't be recommended even to fans of the* Death Wish *films. "*
MIKE **48%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: well-defined, with colourful backgrounds – colliding characters are messy, though
Sound: a fair tune, not much atmosphere
General rating: the attractive appearance doesn't compensate for unexciting gameplay

Presentation	73%
Graphics	61%
Playability	41%
Addictive qualities	39%
OVERALL	**45%**

HEIST 2012



▶ **Password-passing, code-cracking and bank-breaking in** *Heist 2012*

Producer: **Firebird (Silver)**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Author: **Lee Dowthwaite**

It is the year 2012. Earth has been living on credit for some time now, and the few people who still use 'real money' put it into massive bank organisations, the biggest of which is the L.D. International United Bank in Switzerland.

The bank is so big that even its employees know only a tiny fraction of the vast complex. Day and night it is patrolled by troops of cyber guards that will destroy anyone they find lingering suspiciously around the bank.

You play a poor computer-systems engineer who has a craze about money and will do anything to get it – even hack your way into the central bank computer and transfer all the money from other accounts into your own.

On each level of *Heist 2012*, you must find a key. This opens a safe, from which you collect letters that build up a password. When you have all the letters, find your way to the computer room and press HACK. You must then type the password and press ENTER. If the password is accepted, you'll gain access to the next level.

Type 'exit' and press ENTER, and walk over to the elevator to leave the computer room. Elevators, represented by shafts of light, are dotted around the playing area to make your life easier; to start an elevator just walk into it and to get out on the next level just walk out left or right.

But watch out – if you touch a cyber guard, you lose strength and risk death.

CRITICISM

● " *Heist 2012* is the worst game I've yet reviewed at CRASH – it's just a bad imitation of *Jet Set Willy*. The opening music is flapdoodle *(Nick Roberts Daft Dictionary)*, and there are the usual unimaginative monsters like blinking eyes, moving splodges and big lumps of something. The gameplay isn't very exciting, either . . . "
NICK **10%**

● **" The graphics take us back to the innovative and original days of** Jet Set Willy **and** Technician Ted**, but sadly that's where the similarities finish.** Heist 2012 **is boring and devoid of character, like the graphical person you control. I just hope people don't take this as a typical Firebird budget release. "**
PAUL **11%**

● *" Aeons after most people are sick of platform games, out comes this rubbish – I was terminally bored after only a few games. A horribly deformed sprite totters around a crudely-drawn screen, and there's a weak and grating 'tune'. Firebird has made a big blunder releasing this. "*
MARK **15%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: small, uninteresting sprites on a plain background
Sound: does for the ears what the graphics do for the eyes – with an awful tune
Options: definable keys
General rating: a very poor platform game with particularly missable graphics

Presentation	19%
Graphics	13%
Playability	16%
Addictive qualities	11%
OVERALL	**12%**

MASK I

Producer: **Gremlin Graphics**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Gremlin in-house**

If Matt Trakker had known he was going to have to enter a time vortex to rescue his fellow MASK agents, he wouldn't have enjoyed his breakfast cornflakes quite so much.

Created by the odious organisation VENOM, the vortex has delivered Trakker's colleagues to four other times – Boulder Hill, Pre-Historic days, the Far Future and VENOM Base – in this licence featuring characters from the *MASK* TV cartoon series and Kenner Parker toy range.

There are two agents awaiting rescue in each time, save in the first where Trakker rescues just one agent and his own MASK – which gives him superpowers.

To begin the rescue operation, Trakker must enter the vortex in his flying car *Thunderhawk*, already racing against time. First he needs to put together eight keys. Each has been split into four parts, and must be pieced together on an assembly screen; there are useless bits of key lying around to confuse Trakker, though, and only six parts can be carried at a time.

Our hero needs the keys to activate two scanners which will locate his missing agents. Following the scanners' electronic directions, Trakker can pick up his fellows by driving *Thunderhawk* into any doorways that might imprison them. A MASK agent will leap for freedom into the flying car – and then the search for his own MASK can begin.

Trakker's task is not made easier by obstacles that block *Thunderhawk*'s path, so he collects bombs to remove them – a quick getaway is essential, though, because the destructive devices can wipe out Trakker as well! Up to three bombs can be carried at a time.

In each time, different perils are encountered: falling boulders in Boulder Hill, pterodactyls in the Pre-Historic period, UFOs in the Far Future, and at VENOM Base erupting snakes and lumbering firing tanks. If they're not destroyed by *Thunderhawk*'s weaponry (for points as well as satisfaction), these can damage the vehicle. Damage is shown on a indicator display, and repair kits must be collected when two units of damage have been sustained.

After the agents on a level have been rescued, they can be returned to the vortex, and Trakker can make his way to the next of the unknown times.

Finally VENOM Base can be destroyed in a series of deadly stages – and then Trakker's ultimate goal is achieved, and he can go home for another soothing bowl of cornflakes.



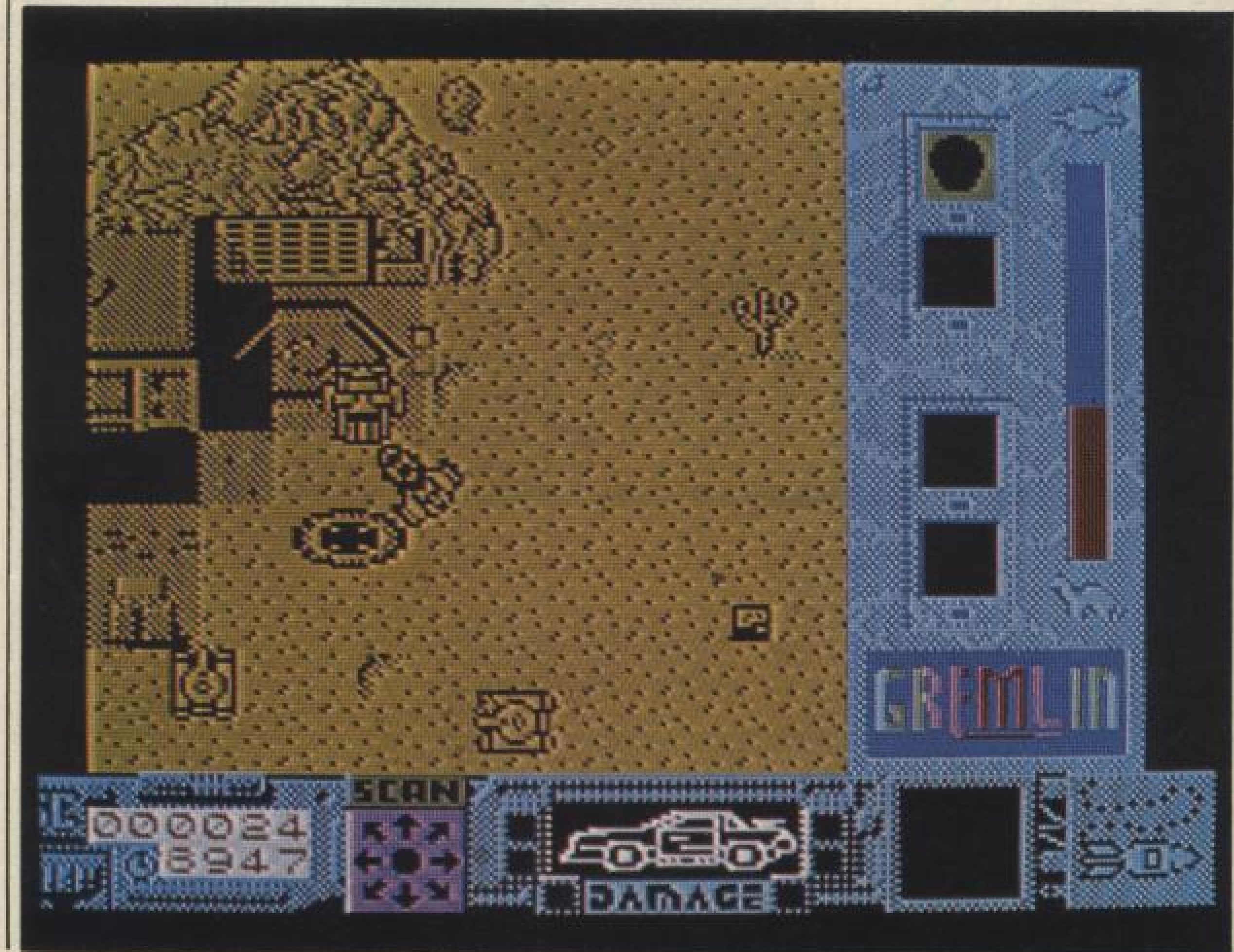
▶ **Heading down toward a heavily-guarded building in *MASK I***

MARK

" Graphically MASK I is very good, with a horde of nasty VENOM baddies chasing our hapless hero around a solid, colourful screen. Sound, though, consists of the usual bangs and crashes, and control is quite fiddly – but the game's addictiveness keeps you playing. "

87%

▶ **The key-assembly screen where you . . . well, assemble the key, really**



RICKY

" Games based on popular toys have never really worked before – Transformers and Challenge Of The Gobots were letdowns – but MASK I looks like it'll put all that right with a very involved puzzle/shoot-'em-up game. It's well-designed, well-executed and immensely playable, and has enough action to prevent it from becoming too much of a cerebral exercise. Controlling Thunderhawk may be frustrating at first. but when the inertia effect has been overcome it's positively useful (especially when dodging the falling rocks on Boulder Hill!). MASK I is a game to spend time over and work at – definitely no one-minute wonder. "

85%

PAUL

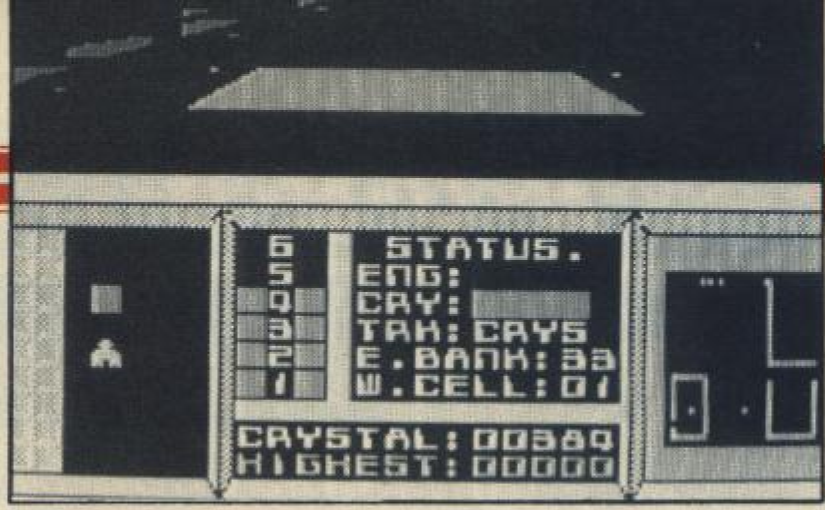
" MASK I certainly has the graphical appeal of a successful game, but it's too tedious to keep you interested – most of the time is spent trying get hold of a very uncontrollable car. The layered graphics give as strong a feeling of 3-D as possible, but the lack of colour detracts from the atmosphere of the different eras. Though MASK I stands out from the others of its genre, mainly because of the graphics, it lacks the edge of appeal. "

70%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: well-defined; monochromatic playing area
Sound: 128 tune and additional FX
General rating: a worthwhile licence with lots of depth and playability

Presentation	66%
Graphics	80%
Playability	74%
Addictive qualities	76%
OVERALL	**81%**



▶ **Weird 3-D action in CRL's** *Sun Star*

SUN STAR

Producer: **CRL**
Retail price: **£8.95**
Authors: **The Zen Room**

Realising that the sun can be used to obtain something other than a tan, scientists construct 16 solar grids in space. These orbit all the suns of the universe, efficiently creating energy crystals.

However, the craft that once collected this raw product can no longer do so because of the accumulation of unstable energy pulses. The *Sun Star* supply craft has therefore been built.

Four white disruptor pulses exist on the gridwork of each solar panel. Firing at these with laser bolts makes them jump to another part of the grid, leaving behind a green energy crystal. But if this crystal isn't quickly collected by sliding the *Sun Star* over it, it loses energy and burns out all the crystals already collected.

When ten crystals have been gathered from one a you move to the next grid by passing through the revolving warp gate and firing a laser bolt into the heart of an orange hyperwarp cell.

The *Sun Star*'s energy, reduced by laser firing, high-speed travel and space obstructions such as red energy pulses, can be supplemented a limited number of times by entering the hyperwarp cell. Each time, one of the collected crystals is lost, though.

The *Sun Star*'s position is pinpointed by a global scanner and a short-range viewer identifies nearby targets. The main 3-D screen shows the grid with the positions of the coloured cells and the dangerous red energy pulses, and the position of the last disruptor pulse fired is given at the head of the screen.

CRITICISM

● " Sun Star *was probably meant to be one of those games which people play because it's wild and wacky – like Jeff Minter's work. But* Sun Star *fails miserably because of dull and inefficient gameplay and difficult screen layout.* "
RICKY **31%**

● **" The 3-D grid idea isn't exactly new – it's been used repeatedly in games such as** Glass **(Quicksilva 1985) and more recently** Plexar **(reviewed this issue). And because you have to keep your eyes on the scanners at the bottom of the screen, you never look at the grid itself. The idea of chasing white blobs around the grid and shooting hell out of them is so unappealing that it won't hold anybody's attention for long. "**
NICK **49%**

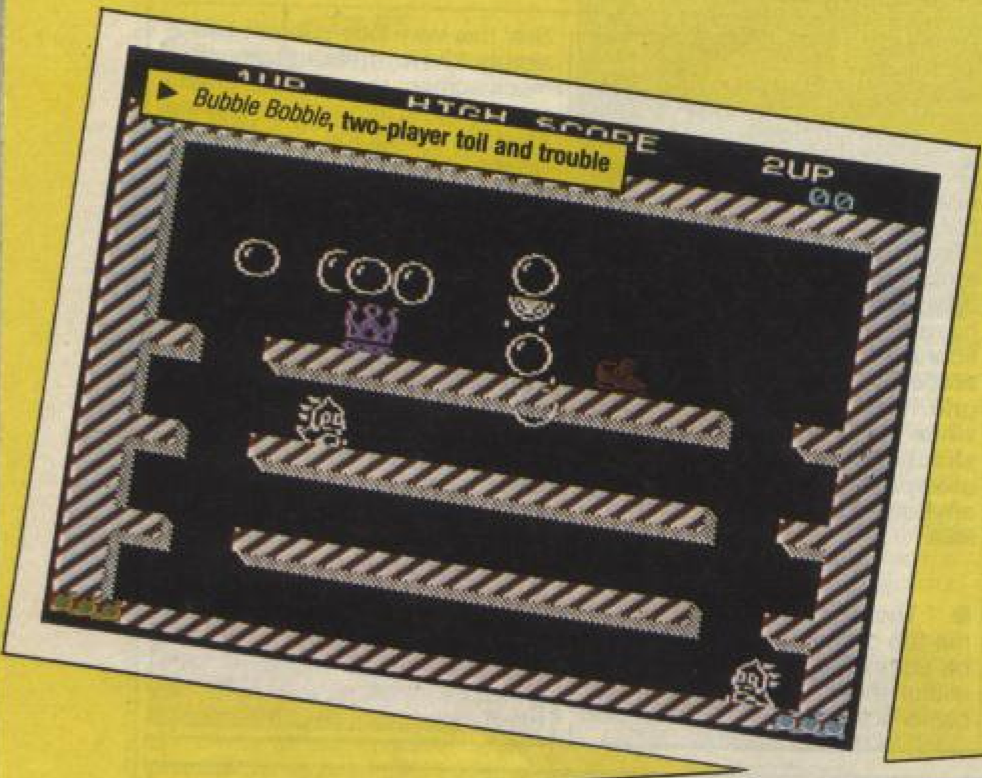
● " The big 3-D scrolling area at the top of the screen turns out to be completely useless – the only useful thing, in fact, is the very basic scanner lower down. *Sun Star* has very little content and is simply lots of trekking around a black screen: the graphics create absolutely no atmosphere and the sound is a disgrace. *Sun Star* is a disappointment. "
PAUL **20%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: terrible colour clash on the 3-D grid – and generally poor
Sound: weak spot FX
General rating: an imaginative idea for a shoot-'em-up, but uninteresting gameplay and graphics

Presentation	41%
Graphics	25%
Playability	29%
Addictive qualities	26%
OVERALL	**30%**

B·U·B·B·L·E B·O·B·B·L·E



Bubble Bobble, two-player toil and trouble

Bubble-blowing Brontosauri? Yep, Taito's crazy arcade game featuring the fun-loving Bub and Bob has finally made it onto the Spectrum. The troublesome two are off to rescue their lady friends, who are lost within a string of prehistoric caves.

Each cave consists of a screen filled with platforms, and Bub and Bob progress from one cave to the next when the entire screen has been cleared of the killer cave-dwellers.

Though *Bubble Bobble* can be played by just one person it is ideally for two simultaneous players; when two-player mode is selected Bub and Bob appear onscreen and shortly after that the hostile cave-dwellers emerge and rush around the network of platforms.

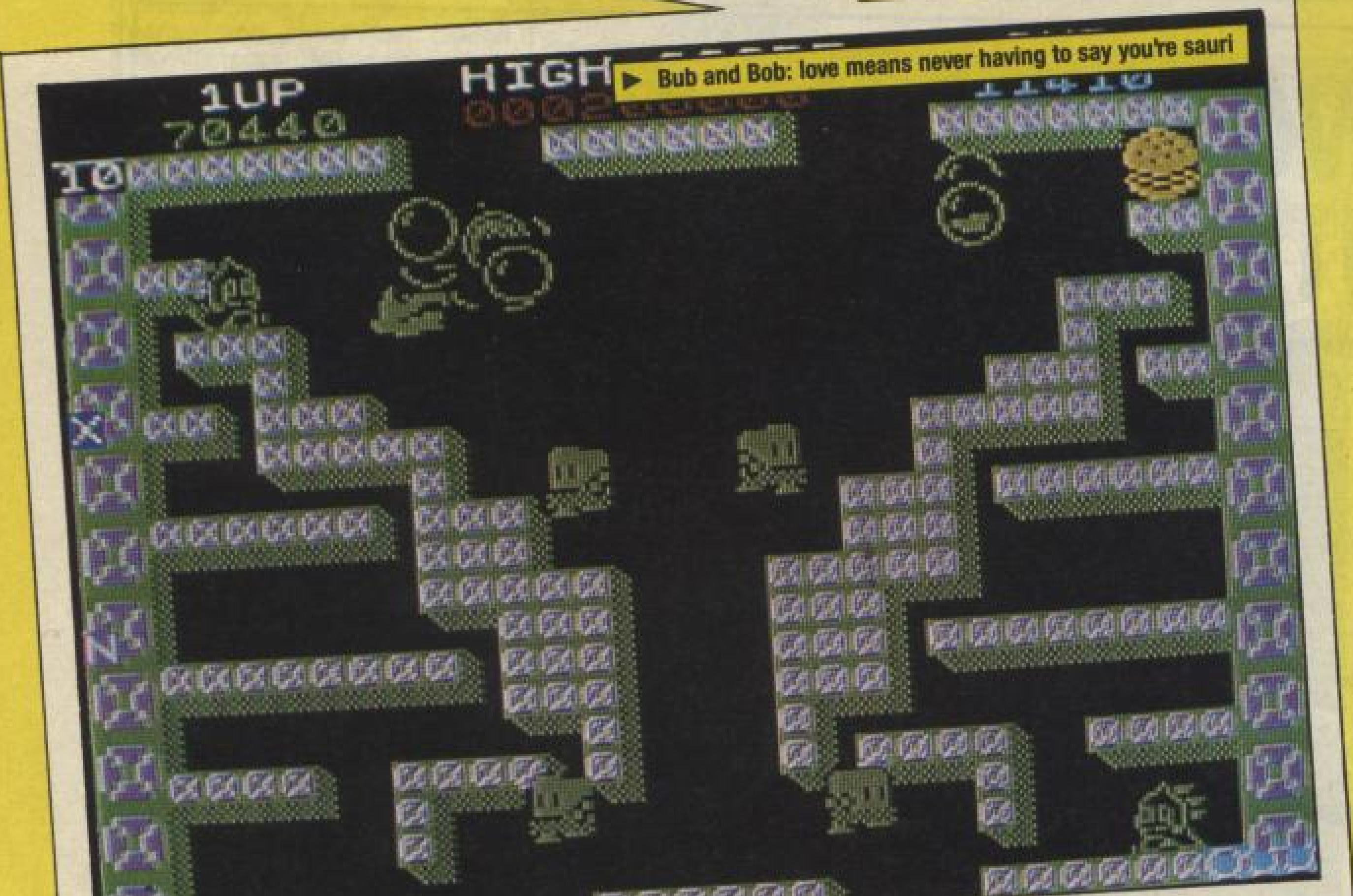
Bub and Bob's only defence against the dwellers is the bubbles which the two sauri spit. A bubble travels forward a short distance before floating upward, and any creature caught in its horizontal path becomes trapped for a while . . .

Now the fun begins – if the bronto jumps up and pops the bubble with his tough horny head, the creature within bounces around the screen, stunned, and turns into a banana which can be collected for an extra score. However, if a bubble with a creature in isn't burst quickly the prisoner escapes and rushes around the screen in a strop looking for the responsible brontosaurus.

CRITICISM

" Having never actually played the arcade version, though I've seen it, I'm totally intrigued by Bubble Bobble **– beautifully simple and well-executed, it plays superbly, looks good and has that one-more-go appeal that'll have you playing till the brontosauri come home. The continuous tune on the 128 version matches the frantic action of the game and certainly keeps the adrenaline rushing. I reckon** Bubble Bobble **will be one of my all-time favourites, and it's definitely one of the best arcade conversions this year. "**

RICKY **93%**



Bub and Bob: love means never having to say you're sauri

Another hazard which appears if a screen isn't cleared quickly enough is the dreaded Baron von Blubba, an indestructible horror who'll track down the heroic dinos and give them his fatal touch if all the other creatures aren't destroyed very rapidly.

CRITICISM

" Bloop, bloop, bubble bobble – Bubble Bobble **is like overdoing it with the bubble bath! It's just popping with playability and addictiveness. The cute little characters move very well, the platforms are very colourful and there's no clash visible anywhere. The bonuses are fantastic, and two-player mode gives that extra boost of excitement if you're evenly matched. Just one final thing to say: WATCH OUT FOR THE GIANT PEACH! "**

NICK **86%**



Producer: **Firebird**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Software Creations**

CRITICISM

" Bubble Bobble **is so much fun! The graphics are cute, and though it's quite easy to play it's remarkably addictive. Having seen the other versions, I was convinced that the Spectrum game was going to be a let-down – but far from it,** Bubble Bobble **is excellent, pretty, enjoyable, addictive, simple, exemplary and a strongly-recommended buy.** "
MIKE **93%**

Throughout a level, bubbles float up from the bottom of the screen. Some are water-filled and when they're burst they cause a miniflood which pours down the screen, sweeping away any creature that stands in its path. Other bubbles contain letters, and an extra life is awarded to the lucky pair if they can form the word 'E X T E N D'. Occasionally saurus treats appear, either giving extra points or endowing the prehistoric pair with special powers.

As the dinosaurs progress through the levels, all manner of creatures are encountered. Early levels are inhabited by square-headed morons, but as you progress the locals get more vicious and start lobbing things back to counteract the bubbles. On finally reaching Cave 100, the last one, you come face to face with heap big chief cave-dweller who's bigger, nastier and generally more unpleasant than anything encountered before. Bubbles at the ready, boys . . .

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: plain backgrounds but supercute characters
Sound: marvellous 128K tune, good spot FX
Options: two simultaneous players possible – even recommended – and definable keys
General rating: the most playable arcade conversion this year

Presentation	86%
Graphics	87%
Playability	91%
Addictive qualities	89%
OVERALL	**90%**

SOLOMON'S KEY

Producer: **US Gold**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **Probe Software**

Deep in King Solomon's mines lies a vast fortune, there for the taking – for anyone foolhardy or greedy enough to enter the subterranean world.

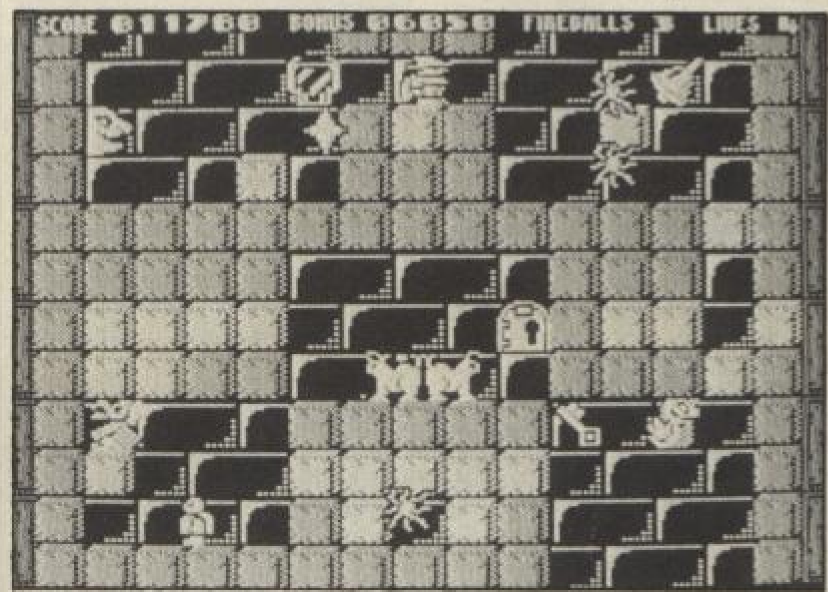
To reach the unimaginable wealth in this conversion of a coin-op original, you must make it alive through a series of rooms inhabited by menacing creatures like fat-tummied parrots, Michael Jackson llamas, jellyfish and fireball-firing heads. Not even the hardiest of souls can withstand their withering touch, and you have only six fragile lives . . . but the unpleasant creatures can be disposed of with the fireballs you find in this underworld.

Each room contains coloured blocks arranged in patterns across the screen; these can be used as stepping stones to a key that unlocks an exit door. Finding a successful route isn't easy, but large open spaces in rooms may be crossed by laying further blocks to create a staircase. Take care, however – the inhabitants of the dark mines can destroy the block you're standing on, sending you tumbling down.

NICK

" **King Solomon must have been a pretty wealthy bloke judging by all the treasure dotted around here! Anybody remember Mastertronic's** Rockman? **Well,** Solomon's Key **is very similar but a bit better presented. The graphics are well-defined, the animation is good and there's plenty of playability. The idea of dodging nasties and collecting keys may not seem too exciting but I assure you you'll be addicted in a second.** "
83%

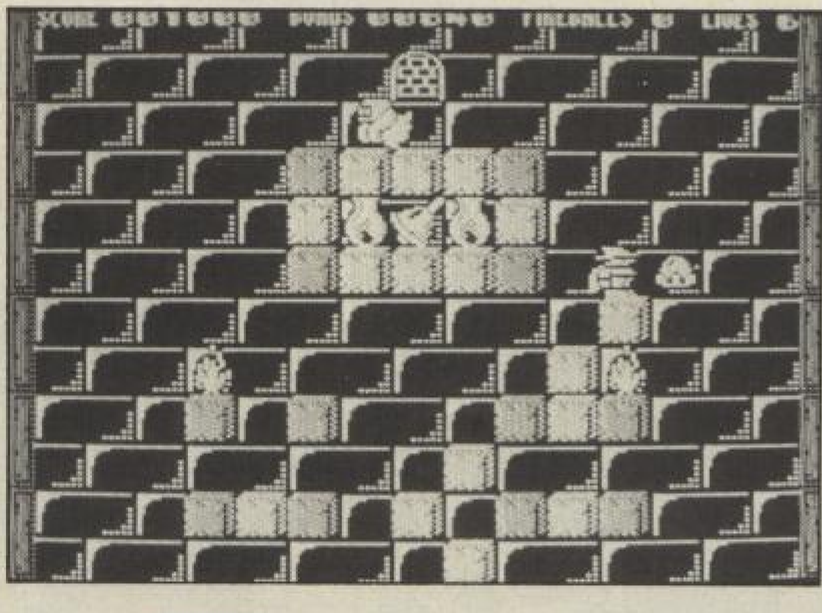




MIKE

" Solomon's Key **has quite a lot of playability, and though the first screen is very easy the second is much more difficult and needs thought. With its small characters and bright graphics** Solomon's Key **looks like a budget game and probably should have been one – still, it's fun.** "
69%

► **Looking out for Michael Jackson in this latest H Rider Haggard licence** ***(shurely shome mistake? – Ed Dir)***



You too can destroy as well as construct, evaporating blue blocks that obstruct a horizontal pathway.

In each underground room, objects – handbells, angels, acorn crowns – can be collected to accumulate points. A time bonus can be added to this total – but if you overstay your welcome and can't reach the treasure before the deadline, then time really has waited for no man and money no longer concerns your corpse.

BEN

" **Despite its simplistic plot and gameplay,** Solomon's Key **has turned out very well indeed. The graphics are good, though they do get a bit cluttered when there's a lot going on. And though I doubt I'll be playing it in a few months, the game as a whole is appealing and fairly addictive.** "
83%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: small and not very colourful **Sound:** reasonable spot FX and decent opening tune
Options: definable keys
General rating: a simple but enjoyable arcade puzzle game

Presentation	81%
Graphics	73%
Playability	82%
Addictive qualities	78%
OVERALL	**78%**

XECUTOR

Producer: **ACE**
Retail price: **£7.99**
Authors: **Cybadyne**

Faced with the unenviable prospect of a Sunday afternoon sitting in front of the TV, you decide to take to the space waves and blast a few alien bad boys into oblivion.

As you venture through a vertically-scrolling corridor, waves of attacking alien craft appear wielding deadly laser blasters.

So it's 'do as you would be done by' as you try to take out these entities with a series of forward-firing weapons. Equipped at first with just a low-level gun, you can enhance your arsenal by destroying certain alien craft; this reveals weapons that can either be collected or themselves destroyed to take you on to a more powerful system.

At the end of each corridor section is a large ominous craft; accurate fire knocks out vital components, but the ship is then transformed into an even more formidable opponent ready for blasting. A measly three lives, fast manoeuvring and expert fighting are the only things that can get you home tonight . . .

MIKE

" Xecutor's colourful graphics make it an attractive game to play, but it's a bit annoying to 'crash' on touching the corner of a character set on a curved piece of scenery. The scrolling is smooth, and in two-player mode the gameplay is a lot more fun and doesn't slow down; otherwise, Xecutor is just a standard shoot-'em-up with neat graphics. "

80%

PAUL

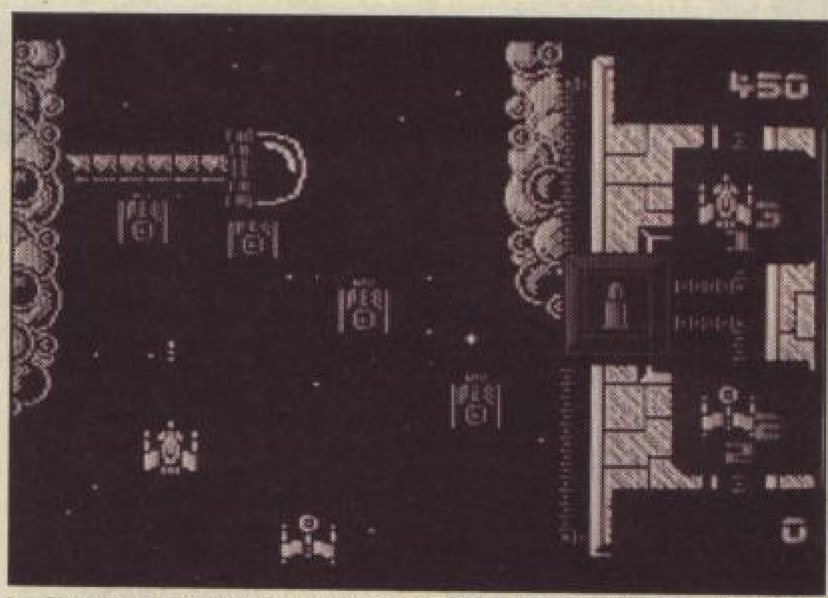
" OK, so it's Zynaps turned through 90 degrees . . . but at least it's a credible clone with a few attractive variations. For instance, the two-player option is a clever addition in which you can not only help but also hinder the other player, and this adds a new dimension to the Nemesis concept. The pick-up technique also requires some skill. Forget the monochromatic Slap Fight and Moonstrike – what you've got here is a playable shoot-'em-up with a superb splattering of colour that doesn't spoil the game one iota. Once you've completed Zynaps turn your hand to Xecutor, and you'll find the same appeal with more challenge. "

87%

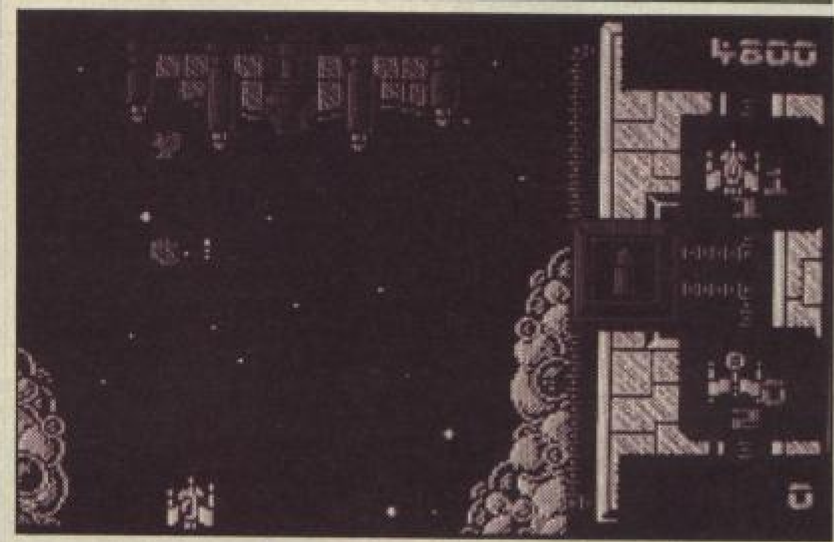
BEN

" Xecutor is one of the best shoot-'em-ups I've seen in ages. It's got great graphics with brilliant scrolling colour scenery and detailed superbaddies. Some of the add-on weapons are very original – the split firing and the pod are really devastating. Xecutor's only drawback is that it's very difficult, difficult to the point of being infuriating after an hour or so stuck on the first level! "

86%

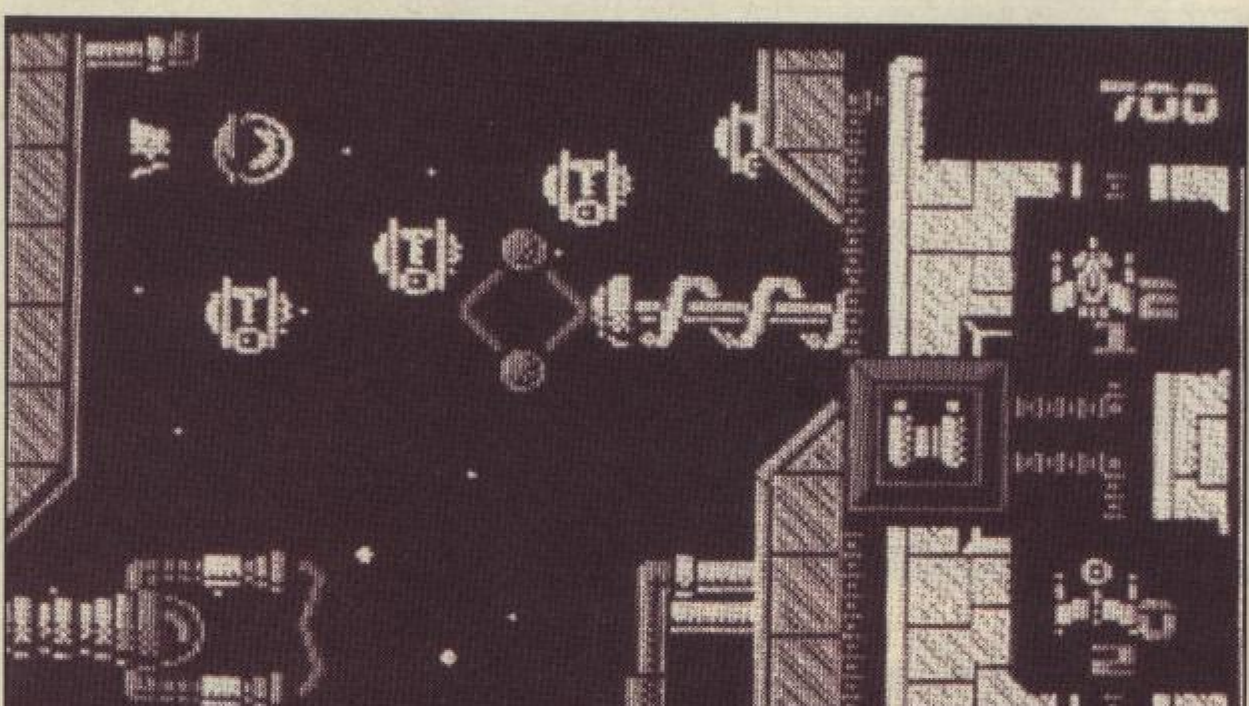


► Shooting 'em up starts with the weapon option shown in that box on the right of the screen



► Prepare to meet your doom, you hulking great mother ship!

► Hordes of marauding foes and other alien clichés . . .



COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: excellent, colourful and detailed with smooth scrolling
Options: two-player mode, definable keys
General rating: a superb shoot-'em-up – a must for anyone who liked *Zynaps* – getting The Edge's new ACE label off to a fiery start

Presentation	86%
Graphics	87%
Playability	82%
Addictive qualities	80%
OVERALL	**84%**

HAPPINESS IS A HOT JOYSTICK

Tired of laundromats, speak-your-weight machines and out-of-order phone boxes? Just can't think what to do with those spare coins? BEN STONE and TONY THOMPSON on their tour of the latest arcade creations . . .

BATLANTIS
Konami

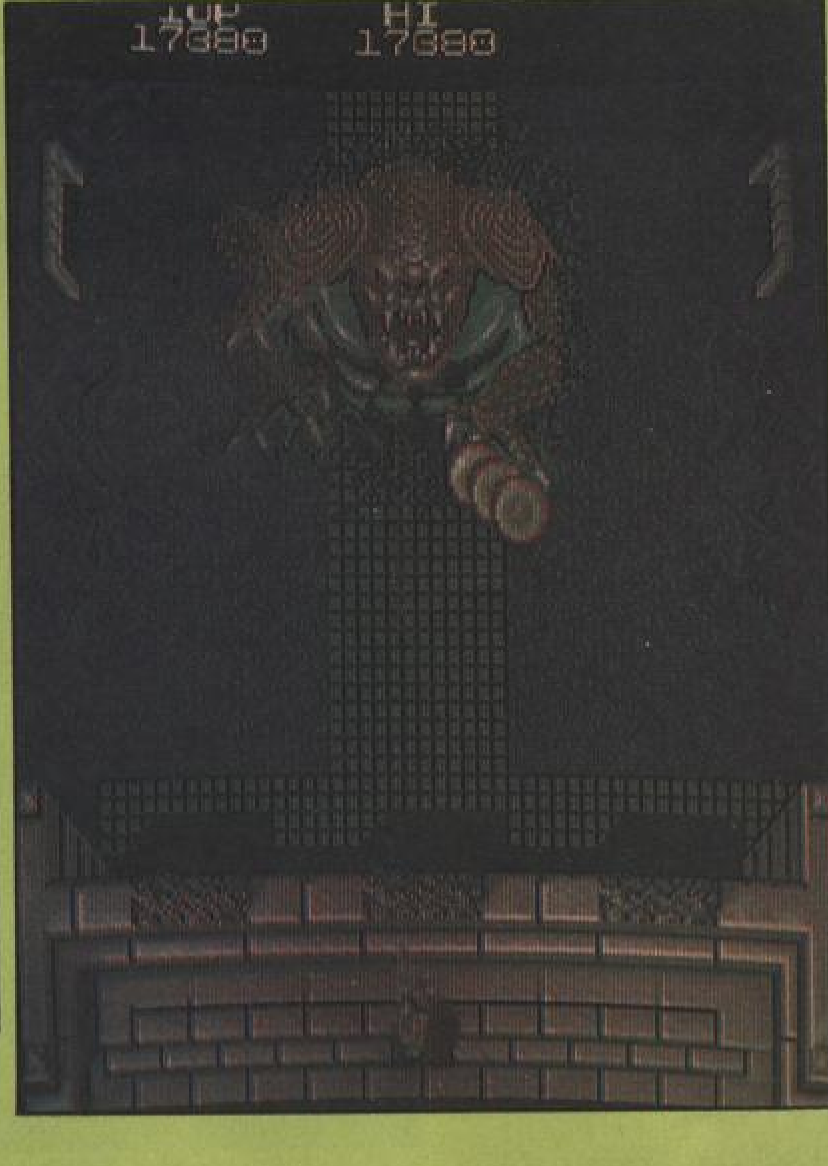
BEN ■ Batlantis is another shoot-'em-up which bears more than a passing resemblance to another coin-op – Taito's *Space Invaders* (remember?) – but revamped, redesigned and regurgitated to 1987's high standards.

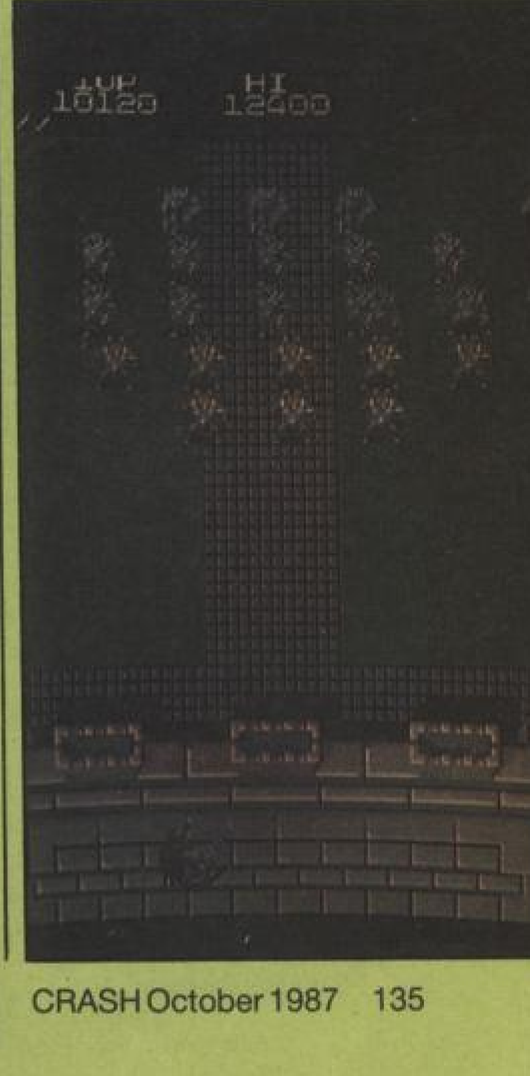
The action takes place on and beyond the ramparts of a castle which is being invaded by the forces of evil: ranks of demons, spined devils, winged beasts and the like, moving down the screen toward the castle wall.

A lone archer stands against these monstrous attackers. Running to left or right he can fire a brace of arrows at a time towards his advancing foes. As the rows of attackers reach the bottom of the wall they disappear from sight for a moment, only to reappear at the top and pause, ready to pounce on the archer.

At the end of each rank or level of horrors comes a frenzied attack from a giant meanie. These giants come in many different forms, from an axe-throwing maniac to a huge gory head that spits flames. I was surprised to find that *Batlantis* is one of the least-played newies around. It's very appealing and instantly playable – though after my last few quid had disappeared down the horrible hole I did wish I'd spent them on *R-Type* or *APB*. The graphics are a little blurred and unclear, but the sound and music leave nothing to be desired, except perhaps a little extra volume!

► *Batlantis – Space Invaders* **with a difference!**





SDI
Atari

BEN ■ Those stinkin' subversives have finally pressed their little red button; all civilisation is only four minutes away from total annihilation, and the whole world sends out a prayer – but unfortunately God is still on his hols.

There is a chance, though, that good ole Ronnie wasn't just kiddin' about his nifty Star Wars project . . .

At the controls of a prototype SDI satellite, your mission, should you decide to fork out the credits, is to protect your country from the enemy's first strike.

The satellite is equipped with a laser which can be aimed with a trackball-controlled cursor and can itself be moved by a separate joystick.

The game is split into two stages: first comes the Offensive stage. Everything but the kitchen sink is up in the skies and out to get your satellite. It is up to you to blast the enemy's floating bases and planet-based silos with your lasers and to dodge their homing projectiles and bolts of energy: if one of them gets too close it's goodbye to one of your three lives.

If you're on the ball you might pick up an equipment pod: these speed up your ship, make the explosions from your lasers bigger, and give you extra cursors to improve your fire power.

While you're doing this the nukes are passing underneath in a lower orbit. You must at all costs blast these; otherwise there'll be a rather embarrassing hole in your home country and a loss of power to the satellite.

When the first wave of missiles has been dealt with, a space shuttle swallows up the satellite and moves it on to the the Defensive stage of *SDI*.

Compared with the previous section this is a doddle – and a rather unoriginal one at that. There's more than a splashing of *Missile Command* here. The bombs drop from the heavens like the thunderbolts of Zeus. Wipe 'em all out by moving downscreen and letting the cursor do all the work – it's a piece of cake, really.

To begin with, *SDI* really phased me – it's so much hassle. I couldn't cope with avoiding the hazards and frantically shooting things at the same time. After a few quid had dropped down the slot, things began to come together – but things also got tedious.

The second stage is a pleasure to play: it's simply a brilliantly improved and polished version of the old classic *Missile Command*. It's a shame that you have to go through the boringly long first stage to get to it . . .

R-TYPE
IREM Corporation

BEN ■ *R-Type* is in the genre of the frenetic shoot-'em-ups *Nemesis* and *Salamander* by Konami. The plot is also of the same unfathomable complexity – destroy the slobbish Bydo empire with your powerful spacecraft.

The screen scrolls horizontally from right to left through eight distinct levels: at the end of each level there is a rather gruesome monster, often occupying more than half the screen. Blast this and you'll be whisked off to the next landscape.

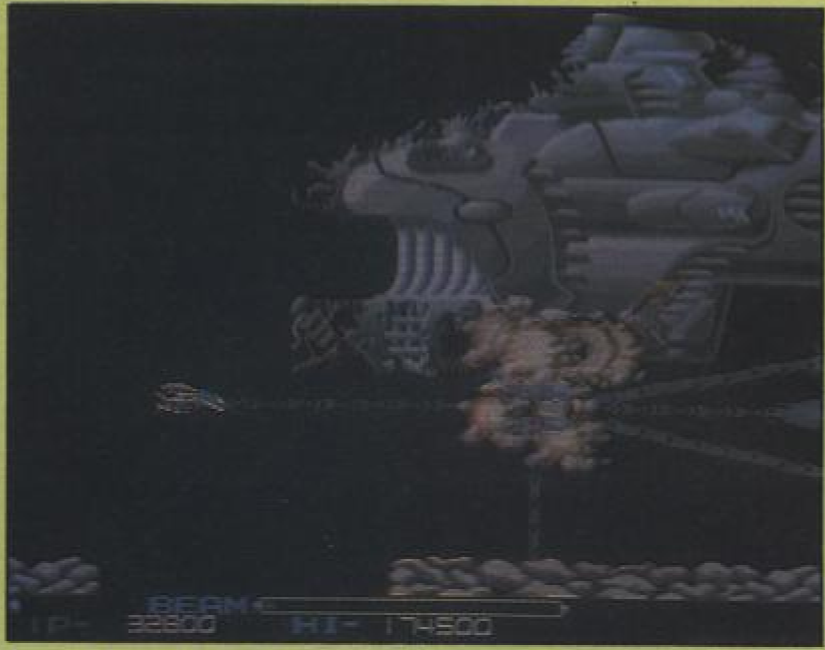
Hostile craft, robots and creatures attack from all sides: many of these Bydoian forces are well-armoured so it will often take more than just a few blasts from your R-9 ship to destroy them.

To increase the power of the ship's onboard laser, hold the fire button down, let go and a more deadly beam is released.

As the game progresses, a distinctive legged sphere appears on screen. Shooting this results in an add-on floating into view. This can be left to follow you around vaguely, or it can be guided toward R-9 and eventually connected to either end of the ship by pressing the ATTACH button.

The add-on can be shot off or jettisoned across the screen by pressing the ATTACH button again (useful for clearing out infested areas and going round corners). Shooting the sphere again and collecting the icon that it leaves behind will increase the add-on's fire power or give R-9 extra speed, more missiles or a shield.

R-Type is undoubtedly the most impressive coin-op of the lot, and one of the hardest to get to play – because there's almost always a crowd round the cabinet! Graphically it's stunning: some of the later, more organic, palpitating levels are truly revolting. As for the game itself, it is simply second to none: difficult enough but sufficiently addictive to keep you piling in the credits.



▶ **More fighting in *R-Type***

TONY ■ Forget the rest, *R-Type* has to be the best game of its kind around. The graphics are brilliant, full of the sort of things you find at the bottom of packets of stale crisps and the liquorice all-sorts that nobody wants. The way the backgrounds fade in and out is just wild, and despite the huge number of independent characters that can be onscreen at any one time the game speed never slows down. There's an excellent range of pick-up weapons that help make life easier and lots of strategy involved later on.

R-Type is ultra-addictive, the sort of game you'd happily sell your granny to get change for. It makes *Nemesis* look like *Space Invaders* and is certain to burn a big hole in your pocket, but you'll love every minute of it.

▶ **R-9 bites the dust – who will save us now from the evil Bydo Empire in *R-Type*?**



▶ ***R-Type*, not a game to be played before dinner**



CAPTAIN SILVER
Data East Corporation

BEN ■ Treasure-hunting is the order of the day in this superb mystical adventure game. Armed with only a trusty sword, the boyish hero Captain Silver slashes his way through a multitude of meanies. The final goal, a cache of treasure, lies far across the seven seas on one of the many islands he encounters.

Extra weapons can be collected on the way. Swords may be picked up or purchased from a shop; magical powers appear as icons, such as shoes to make you run faster and jump higher, or they are obtained by touching the magic fairy who occasionally flits her way across the screen.

The enemies range from manically grinning Cheshire cats to drunken pirates and ghoulish skeletons, and there's a different tactic for defeating each type.

The levels, ranging from a small town (at the start) to a complex desert island, are joined together by a small stretch of sea, crossed in a jolly little boat . . .

Don't be put off by the run-of-the-mill Data East blurry and undefined look; the gameplay is sound so there's a lot of fun to be had from *Captain Silver*. The only drawbacks are that at first it's very difficult and, unusually for a coin-op, the controls take a bit of getting used to . . .

DOUBLE DRAGON

BEN ■ It's the same old story: the girl gets beaten up by a gang of no-good desperadoes and the guy goes chasing after them to free her, battling against overwhelming odds. And all because the lady loves hunky guys and horrible

▶ **Whip in hand, the kinky star of *Double Dragon* awaits a second attack**



APB
Atari

BEN ■ The *APB* cabinet is distinctive, to say the least. Like the early racing games it is equipped with a steering wheel and an accelerator pedal; there are also a couple of buttons on the dashboard to operate the car's gun and siren. (As well as being functional, sounding the siren sets off some funky flashing lights on top of the cabinet!)

The screen shows a bird's-eye view of a busy freeway overrun by traffic offenders: it is highway cop Bob's job to apprehend these petty criminals.

Each day Officer Bob, green as a gherkin and after swift promotion, is given a daily quota of arrests or tickets which must be fulfilled within a given time limit. At the end of the day, if all the work has been done, one of the game's many beautifully-animated sequences follows: the police chief, cigar in mouth, takes Bob into his office, hands out the congrats, mumbles something about Mom's apple pie and pats him on the back. If, on the other hand, the quota isn't completed the chief will do unspeakable things, leaving the luckless cop unable to carry on with the game.

A quick blast of the sirens should have most traffic violators quaking in their seats – the fear of American law and all that. Some are a little more reluctant to pull over, but a few more siren blasts or even a subtle nudge with the front end of the car should put the point across. Care must be taken, though, when nudging other cars – or other animate objects for that matter – as each crash or unnecessary collision notches up a demerit: too many of these in a day and Bob will be slung out of the force.

As the game progresses the quota gets bigger and the time limit shorter. Valuable extra time can be gained in the form of doughnuts, obtained either from doughnut shops or at the side of the road.

Eventually Bob has to catch real villains as well as road hogs. These crooks are a bit more difficult to deal with – they have to be run off the road by skill and brute force rather than simply pulled over. Some have speedier and better-equipped cars than our long-armed hero. 'Not fair!' I hear you cry. Well, there is a speed shop where Bob can collect better bits for his car; these include powerful brakes, better acceleration, guns and radar.

Once apprehended, no self-respecting law-breaker is going to confess to his crimes just like that, so Bob has got to beat a confession out of the rotter back at base.

There's a handy add-a-coin feature and a couple of *secret* level-advance modes . . .

APB is refreshingly different from the usual mass of bash-or-blast-'em-ups. Sound, graphics and gameplay make for one of the most addictive and fun-to-play arcade games around.

Many thanks to Toby Rothwell for playing *APB* (undercover) for us.

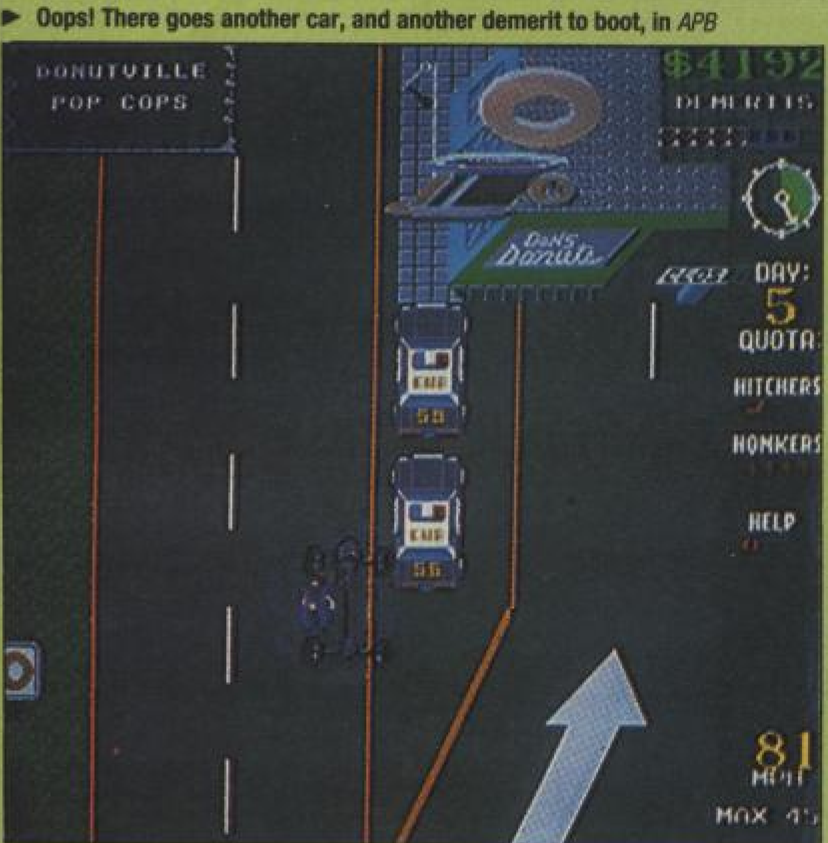
TONY ■ *Hill Street Blues* was never like this – and more's the pity. *APB* is one of the few games that is actually more fun when you *can't* play it very well; when Officer Bob is fired, the screen shows a poor cop being handcuffed by his mates and thrown into a trash can. And the police chief also shows his anger by breathing fire all over you!

APB fun and there's enough going on the keep you comming back for more.

▶ *APB*: Car 54, where are you?



▶ Oops! There goes another car, and another demerit to boot, in *APB*



STREET FIGHTER

TONY ■ The *Street Fighter* machine we tested was still in the prototype stage, but here's a preview. Perhaps there'll be a full review when it hits the arcades nationwide later this year.

There is nothing new about a game which involves two kung-fu experts beating the living daylights out of each other against some elegant backdrop under the watchful eye of a wise-looking Chinaman. *Street Fighter*, however, breathes new life into this fast-fading scenario.

The cabinet is huge – the same size as the one used in the four-player version of *Gauntlet* – and the screen is around twice the normal size so the onscreen characters are also pretty big (nearly 10 inches high).

Each player has a joystick to control his character's movements, but there are also two beat-'em-up pads for punching and kicking. The harder you hit the pads the harder your character hits his opponent (and the more your hands hurt!).

The action is very fast and brilliantly realistic; the backgrounds are superb, the sound effects ace and the synthesized voice . . . abysmal. Well, you can't have everything.

Hitting the pads and moving the joystick in a certain sequence will give you access to secret techniques which devastate your opponent with ease. But after the first round you battle with four more deadly and, usually, armed opponents before moving on to do further battle in another country.

chocolates . . .

Double Dragon is a typical beat-'em-up, putting the usual set of punches, kicks and throws, and some original (albeit below-the-belt) moves like elbow-in-the-eye and knee-in-the-groin at your disposal.

One good touch: two can play at once, taking control of the boyfriend and his mate in their quest to win back the heart of the abducted girl (preferably with the rest of the body attached).

Your opponents usually have to be downed several times before they give up and disappear. You'll come across a few super baddies who make a theatrical entrance (smashing through the nearest wall and so on); these boys are a bit hard, and some of them carry baseball bats, whips, knives or even sticks of dynamite.

Still, a good couple of punches soon disarms an opponent, and you can pick up his weapon to use it yourself. Other objects found in the playing area, such as barrels, can also be thrown at opponents in the bitter fighting.

As you move through the levels you enter the enemy base where the girl is being held; on the final screen you can face as many as six opponents at a time.

TONY ■ This just has to be the best game of its kind around. It's action all the way, and thoroughly addictive – the kind of game you'd happily sell your granny to get change for. The backgrounds are good and most of them are interactive. You can climb walls, throw rocks or even shove the bad guys down the odd pothole.

It's depraved, sick, bloodthirsty, violent – and I love it!

▶ No more ruffians to duff up in *Double Dragon* . . . it must be time to relax, to take a breather, to climb a fence?



BLACK TIGER

TONY ■ As soon as you start playing this game you experince a strong feeling of *déjà vu*. As the scrolling text tells you that you're the only surviving warrior from a race of thousands and that you must rescue your comarades and defeat the evil barbaric ones you meet along the way, you can't help feeling you've heard it all before.

But *Black Tiger* is surprisingly good. You face the usual assortment of warriors, dragons and wizards that you'd expect to meet down any dungeon, and on each level you have to rescue a set number of colleagues who have been turned to stone. When you rescue them, they thank you and offer you gifts of money, armour, weapons or magic potions. The money comes in useful for buying everything else and you'll need more armour and weapons as you get further into the game.

With skeletons and undead beings emerging out of the ground, *Black Tiger* might remind you of *Ghosts N Goblins* – but there is far more strategy involved.

MERELY MANGRAM –

PREVIEW

Coming soon to a Spectrum near you!

IT HAS surprised me in the past that a good film doesn't spin off more than one game, since there are often many subplots to use, but at least **Activision** is having a second go at *Aliens*. The film came out in time for the last *PCW* Show, so that the Activision stand could have a rare preview of some scenes to hype the coming **Electric Dreams** game of the same name. It arrived at Christmas and received 84% in the February CRASH (Issue 37).

Now watch out for *US Aliens*. The adventure is split into six subgames – a compendium, no less! To kick off you are piloting the landing craft down onto the surface of planet LV-426, now inhabited by a bunch of amoral aliens who kill and cocoon anyone ill-advised enough to get within their armour-plated clutches.

After landing you must return your fellow marines to the tank. The killing begins in the third part, as you fend off aliens with a flame-thrower. Then it's a quick race through the maze of air vents to Section Five where Newt, the colony's only human survivor, has to be found. The finale opens with a battle with the angry Queen alien, and the final curtain comes down when you eject her into space – if you manage to.

The clonedrome hits again – it's that interesting syndrome whereby software houses concentrate on the same format all at the same time. It looks like **Electric Dreams**'s *Super Sprint* and budget house **Code Masters**'s *Grand Prix Simulator* are to be released at about the same time. *Super Sprint* is the *official* version of the coin-op road racer featuring eight separate tracks with jump ramps, gates, short cuts and banked corners. Super sprinting press ambassador Andrew Wright, speaking for Electric Dreams, says 'You could be forgiven for thinking *Super Sprint* is just a high-class racing game.' Could I be forgiven, Andrew? Isn't it? Oh well.

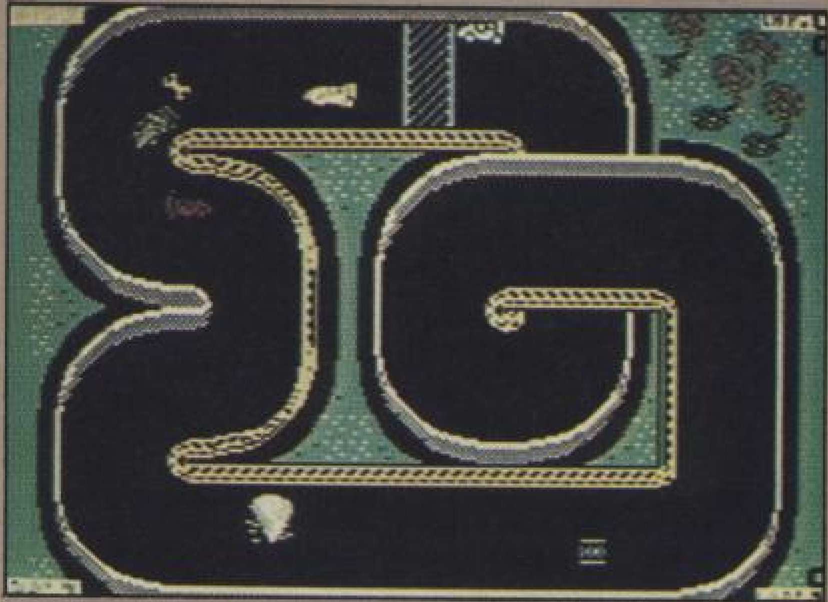
So much for crunchy aliens, hurtling vehicles and biorhythmic balls, now on to something wholesome – the arcades. **Ocean** has one or two licenses kicking their heels on its superportable games machines, and one of them ought to have been featured on our sampler this issue – *Gryzor*. Unfortunately Ocean's Gary Bracey couldn't persuade their programmers to get anything suitable ready in time. *Gryzor* is from Konami – a hectic shoot-'em-up starring you as a one-man army. If you've seen the machine, you'll know what the graphics are like – and let's face it, Ocean will have a hard time putting those onto the Spectrum, but they're trying. It's split into three sections, each offering very different screens, but all featuring hectic battling against enemy soldiers out to prevent you from arriving wherever it is you're going – sounds like a day at CRASH Towers. Also from Ocean . . . look out for *Navy Moves* (sequel to *Army Moves*) and another great coin-op in *Rastan Saga*.

Mosaic has changed its diarist lately, unless Adrian Mole's grown up ferociously fast – now you can leaf through the annals of ministerial life in *Yes, Prime Minister*, licensed from the Beeb Beeb Ceeb. Parliamentary shenanigans are at the heart of this adventure as recently-re-elected Prime Minister James Hacker sets sail on his powerful career. Unfortunately, being a nice man, he has little idea of how to run the country. A relief, then, to see the astute political mind of Cabinet Secretary Sir Humphrey Appleby is still on the team – but it's worth watching his loyalty as he's excellent at saving his own bacon rather than curing yours.

The only trustworthy person is your Private Secretary, Bernard Wolley (unless you count your very own Derek Brewster who will bring the complete political story as soon as we can get a mole other than Adrian to leak it).



► 'Aha you fiendish US Alien! I's goin' blast yous brains out! Ha!'



► It's that Grand Prix simulator *Super Sprint* in from the arcades

Hewson's Steve Turner has been out of the limelight for a few months since *Ranarama* (apart from supplying music for the C64 version of *Anarchy*, a budget release on Hewson's new Rack-It label), but he's about to return with a follow-up to *Quazatron*, starring KPL2 again, called *Magnetron*. *KP (to be familiar . . .) is off on a new adventure set on the space platforms of Quartech in a last*

► KLP2 returns in his new adventure Magnetron, with no jerky scrolling this time round

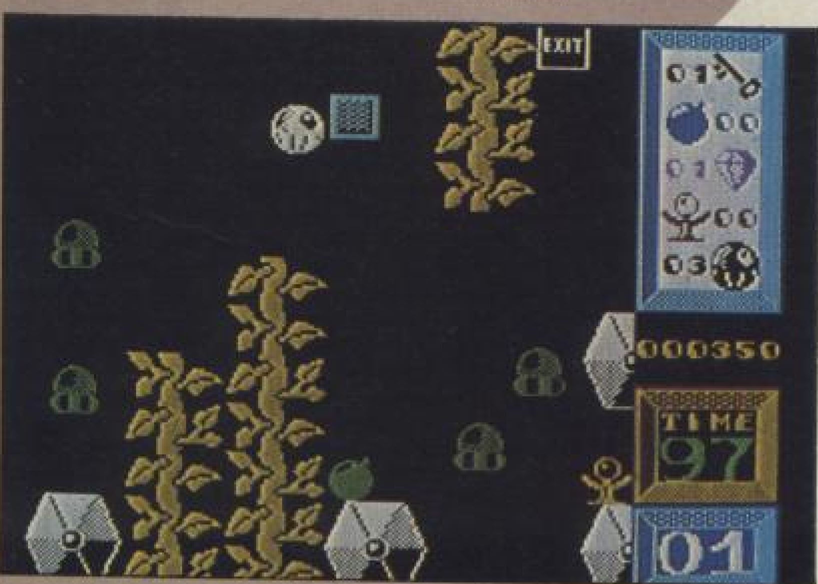




► Of course, anything you say, in fact: *Yes, Prime Minister*



► As the programmer puts it, 'the scrolly bit in *Gryzor*'



► I, Ball II, you Jane

desperate attempt to blow up or neutralise the reactors which act as a life-support system for a marauding alien race (isn't it astonishing how often aliens maraud?). Magnetron should be hitting your screens in dark November.

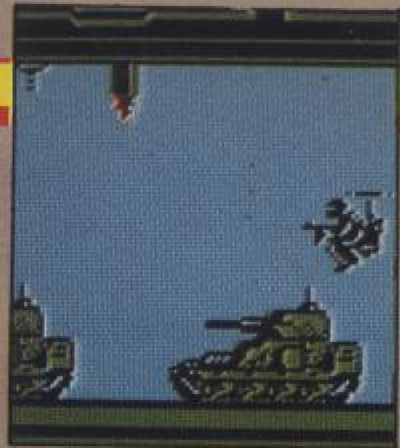
Birmingham's **US Gold** has launched its new label with the hyperactive name of **GO!**, and GO! is go with with a line-up of *Sidearms, Speed Rumbler, Bionic Commandos, Captain America, Brave Starr* and Lazer Tag games – a modest little launch.

Sidearms, a wild 'n' wacky shoot-'em-up set in space, is converted from the Capcom original. *Speed Rumbler* is a car game which finds you bringing peace and elegant charm to the world by shooting enemies and saving families – a sort of family entertainment, in fact.

GO! has announced a tie-up with Mattel which includes a game licensed from Mattel's toy, Brave Starr. Don't groan, it actually looks quite fun. It's about a cowboy of the future who lacks a hoss (poor lad) and has to make do with a jet-powered saddle instead. Should be ready for review next month . . .

GO! is also handling all the distribution for Mattel's Nintendo game system and the new craze in laser-tag light pistols – so if you want information on it write to the usual US Gold address, which can be found on their adverts.

But the GO!ers aren't having it all their own way when it comes to toy licences, because *Action Force* is go, and **Virgin Games** is go too – but not till late October, when Richard Branson's crowd releases the arcade shoot-'em-up adventure inspired by the well-known Hasbro toys. *Action Force* is currently being developed by the infamous Gang Of Five and features ten levels of play with eight screens each. The front-end presentation is great with spinning logos and all kinds of twiddly bits. Virgin person Patricia Mitchell says *Action Force* looks like being



the big Christmas arcade game. Hmmm. Don't they all?

Another, and definitely not Virgin, lady arrived on our doorstep the other day. She was **Martech**'s Nadja Singh, who popped in to tell us that Martech has signed up Nigel Mansell for their new racing-car game. I guess that means he's endorsing the product rather than actually programming the game.

Nadja, who admits to preferring sheep to smelly combustion engines, says the game features the latest in car-design technology, but if you can't be bothered with digital controls and the like there's a perfect opportunity to simply blast around the track at excessive speeds without a care for fuel consumption, tyre wear or the racing line. *Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix* will be out at the end of November on most popular formats (and available at all good car-spares shops).

THE HARDEST BLOW

FREDDY HARDEST

Imagine *£7.95* *End October*

After *Army Moves* and *Game Over* comes *Freddy Hardest* from Spanish software house Dinamic (this time accompanied by an advertisement which does not feature exposed mammaries!).

Freddy, the cheapest playboy in the known universe, has done it again. His heightened sense of direction has dumped him on an inhospitable planet some way off in the galaxy's eastern spiral arm. Like many computer game heroes before him (remember Jetman in *Jetpac*?), Freddy tramps around in search of bits and pieces to repair his space craft. And, as so many have also discovered to their undying horror, the planet's inhabitants, marauding naturally, come thick and fast across the horizontally scrolling landscape to Freddy his hardest time yet.

Luckily Freddy's laser pistol proves to be adequate when it comes to terminating aliens with extreme prejudice, although it's of little use for getting round the craters filled with bubbling lava with which the planet's surface is riddled. They are, of course, lethal to our hero, as are the more advanced aliens which he meets further along in the game. Similar to other Dinamic offerings, *Freddy Hardest* consists of two levels. Sorry, but my preview copy doesn't contain any of the second level, so you'll just have to wait for the review to find out what that's all about.



►

YOU CAN BE A BERK II

Through The Trap Door

Piranha £8.95 End October

'Greetings O great and wobbly viewers to more of my glorious adventures . . .' Berk, the blundering big blue lummox from *Trap Door*, Don Priestley's successful task-orientated game of last winter, makes a very welcome return in his new adventure – *Through the Trap Door*.

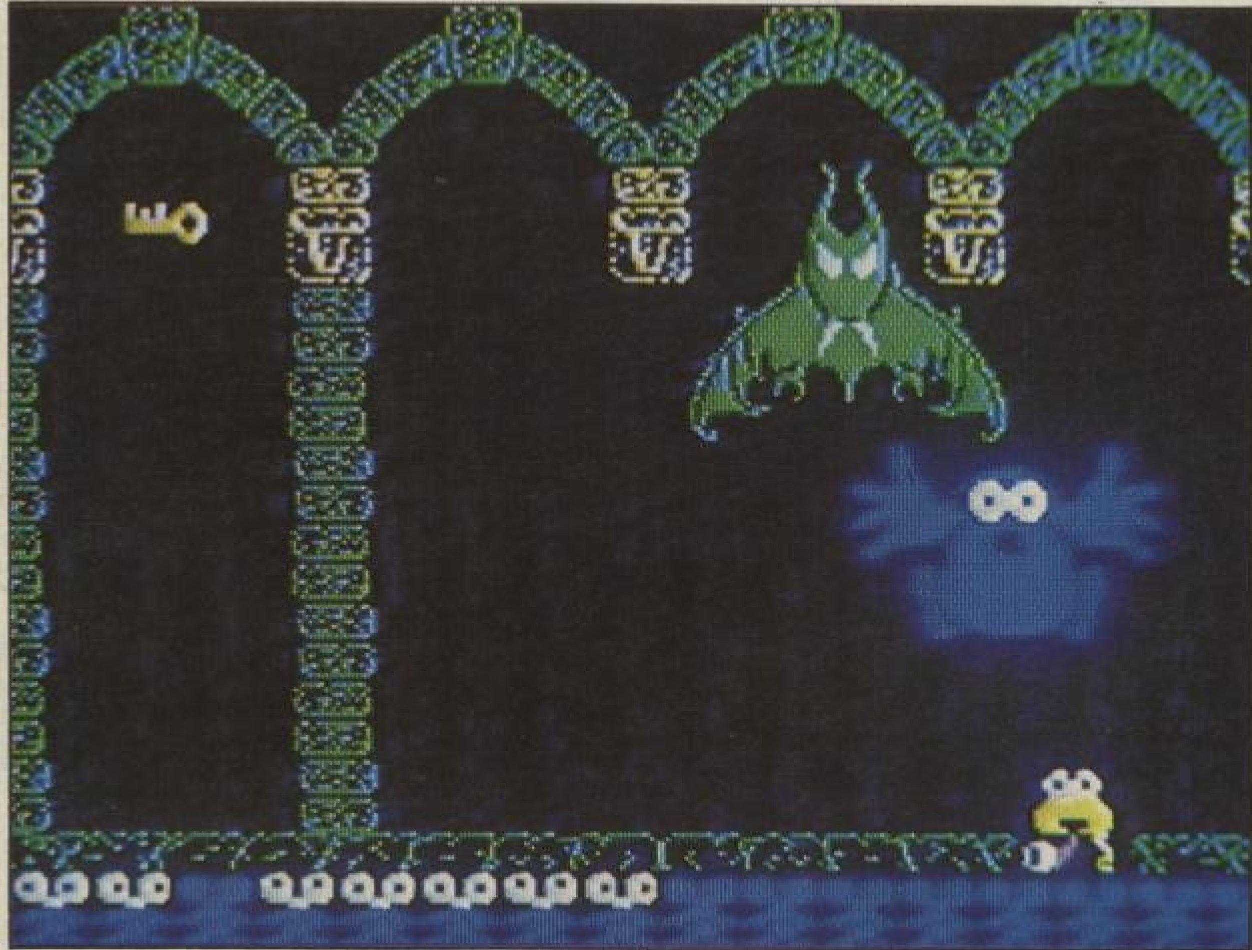
The Trap Door, famed for the grotesquerie that appear from its dark maw, has been causing problems again. Boni, the moaning skull, has been abducted by some cuddly but ferocious monster and taken down to the damp murky depths of the land below. Holding his nose, but ever undaunted, Berk grabs little Drutt the mutant spider and leaps through the door to the rescue.

Unlike most of Don's recent games *Through The Trap Door* is much more action packed, but still retains the characteristically large and colourful graphics. Instead of having to explore rooms and solve lengthy puzzles, the game takes place in a long corridor which scrolls horizontally across the screen. You can play either Berk or Drutt swapping between the two characters as required, after all Berk is positively too fat to do some things and that's where little Drutt may be of help.

On his travels Berk comes across occasional magic potions which give him powers such as flying and bouncing. You'll need to work out which potion to use to get past some of the more unpleasant creatures.

Bug-eyes along the bottom of the screen represent the snoozeometer – if the two heroes take too long to get past specified points the bugs fall asleep and when all are slumbering either Berk or Drutt lose a life. If you're reading this at the PCW Show, be sure to visit Piranha's stand where *Through the Trap Door* and Berk are on display.

► That big blue Berk returns in *Through The Trap Door*, but just what is Berk up to? (About three feet, methinks - Ed)



► 'Oh Gobbets! It's one of them peculiar creatures . . . !'



WIN A BERK!

Do you want a Berk – to have and to hold, to love and to cherish and keep him all for your very own? Piranha are offering a cuddly blue Berk for someone to win in this Quick-Comp. Simply name two other Don Priestley games, write them down on a postcard and post to: I WANNA BERK, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB* to arrive no later than 25 October, which is, incidently, around the time when *Through The Trap Door* is to be released.



Crash Competition

CRASH ZX SPECTRUM

THE CLASSIFIEDS

LASER GENIUS 48/128 swap for *The Pawn* or *WHYK* A Schimnel, *5 Darwin Close, Nottingham, NG5 9LN*

WANTED *The Biz* and *Horse Racing Manager* by Virgin will swap or buy Gary Sutton, *20 Danbury Close, Markstey, Essex, CO6 1XL*

TIMEX PRINTER, Paper, Protek Interface, QSII, Offers? Top software eg *Gauntlet, Zoids* for sale or swap for CBM 64 games. Tel James: 0306 886829 after 6.00 pm.

POWERTRAIL is a *Spectrum Fanzine*. We need pokes new and old, maps, and views on presentation. Write to *1 Ashbury Drive, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks., RG3 5LJ*

FOR SALE *Spectrum 48K, DK Keyboard, Interface, Joystick, Speech Box, Light Pen, 64K Shadow of the Unicorn*, worth over £400 new. Will sell for £75. *Phone Lee on High Wycombe 37442.*

URGENT, SWAP my *Turbo Esprit, Back to Skool, Feud* for your *Theatre Europe* contact *Paul Kehoe, 62 Cranfield Road, Marus Bridge, Wigan, WN3 5QG.*

***ELITE* WANTED**, swap for five of *Commando, Fairlight, Movie, Saboteur, Leaderboard, Tournament, Tapper, Robin of the Wood, Super Soccer or Zombie x2* write to: *R Brown, 9 Queens Close, Norwich, NR4 7PE.*

SINCLAIR ZX PRINTER plus five rolls of paper with manual. In good working order £15. *Phone: 061-338 4274* after 6.00 pm.

WANTED 128K WAFERS for Rotronics Wafadrive. Will pay £3 for each one in excellent condition only. *Tel. Weston-super-Mare 813282*. After 6.00 pm.

PENPALS WANTED must be a Spectrum User, interested in writing not copying programs. Write to: *Ian Edwards, 202 Sterling Road, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 1ST.* I'll bin chain letters!

SPECTRUM SOFTWARE FOR SALE: Price from £1, *VAT Manager, Ian Botham, Cricket, Backpackers, Pole Position* and more. All original. *Phone Sam 01-368 3784.*

WANTED, *THE RATS* in exchange for a top recent release. *Allan Edginton, 2 Langton Villas, Hampden Road, London, N17 0BA.*

WANTED ISSUE 1 AND 9 OF CRASH. Cash or software. *Phone York 761090* evenings.

SWAP my *Dealtevators, Jason's Jem and Incredible Shrink Fireman* for one of your *Arkanoid or Army Moves. Please phone 0229 29722*. Ask for Richard.

LOTS OF GAMES TO SWAP. Send your list for mine. eg *Elite, Enduro Racer, Star Quake David Cashin, 132 Donomore Avenue, Killinardan, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Ireland.*

SPEC MATE Order the first issue now. Send a p/o for 50p to *D Cummings, 64 Southfields Drive, Stanground, Peterborough, PE2 8DX*. (Please state name and address).

***SPEC*, Great New Fanzine** for ZX Spectrum, only 40p. Issue 1 available October 5th. Send SAE for details to *N Jones, 34 Lyndale Drive, Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, W Yorks, WF2 0JZ.* All letters answered.

PEN PAL WANTED. Own Spectrum 48K. Also own Amstrad, CPC64 would also like to swap games. *Christian Capstaff, 8 Apsley Rd, Gt Yarmouth, Norfolk, NR30 2HG.*

SAGA EMPEROR KEYBOARD for sale £22.00, *Spectrum Power supply* £5.00, *Spectrum Rubber Keyboard* £7.50 - all in A1 condition *Phone Chorley 76171* after 6.00pm Martin.

New Barton Street, Salford, Manchester.
FOR SALE Snapshot 2 Interface will swap for any printer. Also wanted a Multiface 1. All letters answered. Write to *Gary Mulvihill, 46 Calderwood Road, Donnybrook, Douglas, Cork, Eire.*

NEW UNWANTED GAMES TO SWAP. Games include *Mutant, Vulcan, GAC, The Boggit, Scalextric* etc.. Also interested in fantasy board games. Ring Spencer any time on *(0322) 69472.*

VERY GOOD SELECTION of Spectrum games for sale from 50p to £4.00 or will swap. Phone after 5pm. *01-654 1392.*

IT'S A CRIME! PBM *Turf Mapper* for Spectrum. Full on-screen and printer details of up to 240 blocks. £1 ppd from *Andrew Rose, 68 Milward Road, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 3RR.*

SOFTWARE TO SWAP send list of games to *Nick Simms, 3 Nuneaton Road, Fillongley, Warwickshire, CV7 8EZ, (0676) 42508* 'I only swap good games.'

WANT TO SWAP GAMES will swap all kinds phone for list *Tel: James on 0494 786631* Swap Animator One for Art Studio Please.

ROTRONICS WAFADRIVE £30 or swap for other hardware plus £20. All offers considered. Write to *Robert Gall, 14A Rectory Lane, Glinton, Peterborough, Cambs, PE6 7LR.*

SPECCY FANZINE *Eprom* Issue Two, great articles, reviews, viesws, intervies and things. Definitely the best around! Only 70p plus stamp from:- *328 The Maltings, Penwortham, Preston, Lancs PR1 9FD*

SELL OR SWAP your original software through our established free newsletter. Make extra money! Get those new games! Free details (stamp please) from *Robert Burgess, 1 Middlefield Road, Rotherham, S60 3JH*

ARKANOID, *Droid, Academy, Six Pack*, Exchange for any games adventures or *Leaderboard* have many other times. *James Scott, 3 Wilton Close, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 1EZ or 0823 337817*

SOFTWARE TO SWAP. Many good titles write for list to *Peter Davis, The Rath, Swords, County Dublin or ring Dublin 405083.*

SPRINT. Yes a great new fanzine is now out. Only 30p; all about the *Spectrum*. For more information phone Alan on *01 959 0518*

FREE SOCCER PBM! Absolutely no charge except an SAE per turn. Reply now to ensure your place. Totally free! Interested? SAE to *THS, 47 Spencer Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 5LE*. Now!

12 YEAR OLD COMPUTER FREAK seeks similar for correspondence. Apply: *Knut Lodge, Viking Heights, Martlesham, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 4RT* my name is *James Heathfield*

SWAP SCOTCH PHOTOCOPIER VGC for software, hardware or anything interesting. All letters answered, write to *Martin O'Connor, 56 Whittington Hill, Old Whittington, Chesterfield, Derbys., S41 9HA.*

PBM RUGBY LEAGUE CHALLENGE can you lead your team to the championship SAE for further details to *Camelot Games, Cae-Ymryson, Caernarvon, Gwynedd, LL55 2LR.*

HI! I have 400 games to swap, send your list for mine to *Michael Pritchard, 22 Heol Keir Hardie, Penywaun, Aberdare, Mid Glamorgan, CF44 9AW.*

INSTANT ACCESS is the only poke magazine especially for Multiface, Issue 2 out now only £1.00 to *C Redgrave, 30* ▶

CHAOS!

The only problem with these classifieds is they might upset Lloyd. You see, there have been so many ads – for fanzines, software swaps, pen pals, pokes, copies of *Spycatcher* – flying in to the Towers that they're threatening to overpower the pile of Forum letters in the mail room.

There's a good side to this invasion, though; starting next month, the classifieds will be printed under headings. Just mark on the form which heading you want your ad to go under.

And remember there are a few rules governing these free classified ads . . .

1 Individuals and small organisations such as fanzines and homegrown-software publishers are welcome to use the CRASH classifieds, but professional businesses cannot. Paid-for classifieds for businesses will probably be introduced soon.
2 Classified ads should not be more than 30 words long (numbers, postcodes etc count as one word each), and should be written in the boxes provided; there is no box-number service, so **YOUR AD COPY MUST INCLUDE YOUR ADDRESS AND/OR PHONE NUMBER**.
3 Classified ads must be submitted on a CRASH classifieds form, or a photocopy of the form.
4 Absolutely no ads for selling or swapping pirated software or which encourage software piracy will be accepted.
5 CRASH reserves the rights to edit, publish and not publish classified ads without reference to the advertiser, and the magazine is not liable for any loss caused to advertisers through their own wording of ad copy or the appearance or nonappearance of ads.
6 If you send an ad in PLEASE don't ring us up asking when it's going to be published – we'll just print as many in each issue as whingeing Lloyd lets us . . .

I WANT A FREE CRASH CLASSIFIED!

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ADDRESS ....

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.... **POSTCODE** ....

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WRITE AD COPY HERE . . .

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PBM ☐
PEN PALS ☐
SOFTWARE SALES ☐
SOFTWARE SWAP ☐
SOFTWARE WANTED ☐
OTHER ☐

SEND IT TO: THE CLASSIFIEDS, CRASH, *PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB*

GOT NEW UP-TO-DATE GAMES? So have I. Want to swap them? So do I!!! Write and send your list for mine - *R Gabriel, 67 Highland Terrace, Uffculme, Devon, EX15 3EN.*

15 YR OLD MALE would like to swap software with male or female penpal over 400 titles write to *R Shaw, 11 Fulsham Crescent, Ayr, KA8 OND.*

WANTED MULTIFACE 128 - must be reasonable. Please phone *(0782) 626920* after four o'clock. Ask for Edward.

CRASH BACK ISSUES numbers 2, 7, 13 wanted. Good prices paid. Write to *Robert Lines, The Last House, Gomer Lane, Gosport, PO12 2QW.*

128K AND 48K SOFTWARE to swap. Also wap or sell Slo-mo, Kempston, Interface. Send your list for mine to *V Vity, 19 Croft Street, Morecambe, Lancs., LA4 5SS.*

RESTART is a great Spectrum games mag costing 40p and a stamp from *Restart, 1 The Beams, Ufton Close, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 8EH.*

48K SPECTRUM, PRINTER, Low-Profile Keyboard, Light Pen, amplifier, Kempston Interface and Joystick and worthy collection of top software. Worth over £850. Sell for £390. *01-531 0564.*

IS THERE A FEMALE PEN FRIEND out there? 14-16. Please write to me: *Lee Pendleton, 7 Longfold, Maghull, Merseyside, L31 6AF.*

OVER 100 SPECTRUM ORIGINALS to swap or sell. Many new titles, including Uridium, Kwah, Nemesis. Send SAE for list *Rick Vinter, 65 Barnwell Drive, Rushden, Northants., NN10 9HR.*

ANY DISK INTERFACE WANTED Please phone, after 5.00 pm., *(0332) 755152* and I would like one which works with BBC disk drives.

SWAP Currah Speech and DK'Tronics Light Pen for Cheetah Sweet Talker or Stack Light Rifle or Cheetah Rat or almost anything hardware, software. *David Green, Sheffield 747327.*

MULTIFACE ONE POKES over 260 covering 130 new (and old) games. Send only 60p + SAE to *Darren Roy, 153 Norsey Road, Billericay, Essex* for 6 typed sides of A4.

WANTED WORKING 48K RUBBER KEY SPECTRUM or Spectrum Plus will pay £25 plus postage. Write to *Chris Gornall, 205 Cop Lane, Penwortham, Preston, Lancs., PR1 9AB.*

SWAP *GAC* FOR WAFADRIVE STORAGE SYSTEM and some Wafas from recent originals. Also swap Currah Speech, Fifth and The Real You for the Multiface One. Matthew Barton, The Old Vicarage, Broadwidger, Lifton, Devon, PL16 0EP.

NEW TAPE MAG! Spectrum issue one only £1.00. First five replies get money back! Pokes, reviews, news etc. Stamp and cheque to M Tonks, 57 Myrtle Avenue, Selby, North Yorks., YO8 9BG.

WANTED Lightforce (For Uridium), Ghosts & Goblins (Big 4), Strike Force, Cobra (Hijack), Glider Rider (Saboteur II), Winter Games (Commando & Feud) phone Zak 061-962 7638.

SOFTWARE EXCHANGE CLUB Free membership. Exchange your unwanted games (originals only) cheaply. Send SAE for details to: On-Spec, 23 Florence Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 5HR.

WANTED Microdrive and Interface 1. Swap for over 20 games including RanaRama, Saboteur II, Firelord and KungFu Master. If interested please ring Stuart (0633) 440974 after 6.00 pm.

PBM! Why not play a Free PBM - Domain, a futuristic game, where players have to kill to stay alive. Send an SAE to Andrew Bonner, Domain Systems, 4 Park Grove, Bexley Heath, Kent, DA7 6AA.

SWAP GAC, Currah Speech, Bobby Bearing, Thanatos, Scalextric, Turbo Esprit, Winter Games and Feud for a Spectrum + extra instrument tapes. Jonathan Beech, 4 Duffry Close, Bassaleg, Newport, Gwent, NP1 9PD.

SOFTWARE EXCHANGE CLUB, Free membership exchange unwanted originals. Send SAE for details and free membership to Ram-Soft Exchange Club, 14 Park Avenue, Keyworth, Nottingham, BG12 5LA.

FOR SALE *The Great Escape, They Sold A Million* and *Ghosts n Goblins.* Brand new. £12 ono. Phone 055 588239 for more details.

ATTRACTIVE MALE seeks female penfriend aged between 15/16. Interests include sport computers and practically anything else! Please write and include details of yourself. Martin Gunn, 10 Springfield Place, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 5ZA.

SUNDAY LEAGUE the soccer PBM Game. For further details send a SAE to Sport Games, 1 Patricia Drive, Arnold, Notts, NG5 8GJ.

WANTED Opus Discovery for £40 Ramturbo, Elite, Bounces, Hot Shots, Kung Fu Master, Arkanoid, Music-Box, Dam Busters, Max Headroom, Deathstar, Interceptor. Contact Paul phone (0634) 64179.

DEATH BALL A PBM game where anything goes, players required for new seasonabout to begin. Send a SAE A P Overton, 23 Falconer Lane, Woodhouse Mill, Sheffield, S13 9ZL.

WANTED ALPHACOM 32 WITH PAPER £15 available for a good one. Microdrive cartridges also wanted. Write to Mick Blackman, 3 Giffard Drive, Cove, Farnborough, Hants., GU14 8PU.

HELP AND SUGGESTIONS NEEDED for running my own PBM wargame it would have armies, nukes, civilians and careful economy would be needed. Thanks. Jason Smith, 1 Galloway Road, Swinton.

SNOOPY paperbacks wanted nos 46, 41, 39, 31. All CRASH issues available, *GAC* for £10, *Zynaps* for £4 Phone (Ringwood) 04254 5772.

SPECTRUM +, still boxed, interface, joystick over £360 worth of software and mags as new would cost over £500. Sell for £160. Tel 0602 273621.

SPECTRUM 48K FOR SALE plus Kempston Interface and a few games £45 ono. Phone Derby (0332) 810773.

WANTED SPECTRUM 48K OR 128K with or without disk interface. I also need a teletext decoder. For sale: RAM Music Machine. Tel Collins 01-579 9455.

WANTED 128K SPECTRUM for around £60. Box and leads desirable. Humberside area preferred. 45 Huntley Drive, Murrayfield Road, Hull, HU5 4DP. Tel (0482) 442725.

SWAP Aliens, Ace, Super-Soccer, Commodore 1531, Datasse II, Catch 23, Great Escape, Firelord, Head Over Heels, Vulcan, Yankee, Sherlock, Zub, Hobbit and more phone Stefan on 091-460 4861.

WILL SWAP Great Escape or Scooby Doo for both games called Knight Tyme and Stormbringer. Lee Davis 01-745 2332.

SPECTACULAR is the hip 'n' cool fanzine to be seen reading! Send 50p and a stamp to J Davies, 28 Claremont Road, Bishopston, Bristol, BS7 8DH.

DOES ANYONE OUT THERE know how to get out of the Marsh in the Shadows of Mordor? If so please write to tell me. Thanks. Robert Gregson, 14 Lindsay Road, Walton, Liverpool 4, Merseyside, L4 8SR.

SPECTRUM +, Currah Speech, Tape Deck, over £150 worth of books and software cost over £320. The whole lot for only £100 ono. Phone (0903) 724057.

WINNERS & PRIZES

DESIGN A GAME FOR DOMARK

The winners and runners-up for this Issue 39 comp were decided by Richard Naylor of Domark and Graham Stafford of Design Design – or Walking Circles, as it's called now. The winning entry was a game design called *Pile Driver* and came from **Tony Worrall** of Lancashire PR1 9FD, who edits the Spectrum fanzine *EPROM.*

Well done, Tony, and don't fritter your £500 cash prize away, now – you *could* pay to have the broom cupboard redecorated.

A special second prize went to **J Fradley** of Yeovil BA20 2PB for a model.

Some of the 23 runners-up were ZZAP! 64 readers (the same comp was run in ZZAP!), so they shouldn't expect two prizes just because they're listed here too – anyway, ZZAP! readers should be honoured enough to have their names mentioned in CRASH. All these runners-up win games on the Streetwise label . . .

Marcel van Driel, 7206 BV Zutphen, Holland; Marcus Light, W Yorks BD15 8LA; Andrew Sandham, Aberdeenshire AB3 4HQ; Brian Burrell, Essex CM15 0EW; Leo Martin/Stephen Bradshaw, Hove BN3 6AA; Raymond Chan, E Sussex BN4 2PP; Julian Stockoc, Levin, New Zealand; Howard Carlisle, Leeds LS18 4HD; Lucian Paul Hoare, London SE4 2DT; Iain Murrey, Fife KY11 5AE; Khalid Jamil, London NW2 6LA; Gary McDiarmid, Angus DD7 6DS; Tim Eggleton, Milton Keynes MK3 6PP; Elout de Kok, 7907 GE Hoogeveen, Holland; Ian West, Bucks MK18 2PE; Simon E Critchley, Hull HU14 3NN; Anthony Jarvis/Matthew Whitby, Essex IG9 6AE; Timothy Hodges, Cambs PE3 6YL; John Atkinson, Cumbria CA15 7DD; Kevin Payne, Avon BS18 2RZ; and Stuart Thurston, Worcester

HERCULE DE MINION COMP

US Gold's super sleuthing comp in Issue 43 brought in a milliard entries, and for those of you waiting on the edge of your seats wanting to know who stole my buttered scone the answer is **Lloyd Mangram** (not Skippy!). Nasty creature – it's the last time I prune his roses! Anyway, the winner (who gets a Pink Panther video, Agatha Christie's novel *Death On The Nile* and the Issue 42 Smash *Killed Until Dead*) is **Jonathon Lari** of Wales CF6 2DG.

Four second prizes – a detective novel and *Killed Until Dead* each – go to **James Yeo** from Bedfordshire MK44 1BL; **Nicholas Young** from Lancashire OL3 5EG; **C Walker Smith** from Derby, DE2 9LL; and **Gareth C Jones** from Cardiff CF5 3SW. 15 more copies of *Killed Until Dead* go to:

Tom Holstein, Hampshire RG23 7AA; Adam Briggs, Notts S81 ONX; A Wilson, Angus DD3 6DW; Roxanne Bailey, Reading RG2 9DL; Paul Dixon, Kent BR8 7YR; Stuart Brown, West Yorkshire LS8 4BY; Richard Wall, Kent CT4 6QJ; A P Goode, Birmingham B42 1LW; Darren Martimer, Birmingham B31 3UH; Stuart Highley, Nottinghamshire NG12 5LQ; John Croasdale, Nottinghamshire NG15 9FT; Philip Louther, Lancs FY5 3QD; Nichola Truscott, Gloucester GL2 6UA; Daniel Wade, nr Southport, Lancs; and Thomas Price, Devon EX 2EE

WHOOOOPS!

OK, so I made a mistake – and they'll never let me forget it. In the Ferguson adventure comp in Issue 41, Question 4 should have been 'Type in Fordo's birthday – which game's that?' – as in F**or**do from CRL's *Bored Of The Rings* rather than Fr**o**do who, as everyone but me knew, is the hero of *Lord Of The Rings.* You don't get much literature in the broom cupboard . . .

ENTERING COMPETITIONS

If you want to send entries to more than one CRASH competition in the same envelope, write MULTIPLE ENTRY on it clearly and send it to *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*

You are reminded, as if you need to be, that the editors' decision is final when it comes to picking the winners and deciding the correctness of answers to questions set. Also, the exact number of winners and runners-up may be slightly different from that announced in the competition (depending largely on the number and quality of entries), though prizes will be exactly as promised whenever possible.

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RICKY

CRASH T-Shirts come up to date with full colour CRASH covers by our very own Oli Frey on the front – as well as the CRASH logo. Each cover has been personally chosen by a member of the CRASH team. Available in two sizes: Medium and extremely grossly porky (XX Large). Just the perfect complement to your winter woollies or summer shorts in 50% cotton and 50% polyester. You better get 'em quick – they're a limited edition!

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"Head and Heels's arch enemy on your chest! Well, it's better than my school uniform! Good for becoming a real yuppie – exclusive CRASH shirt and a filofax. Dress to thrill ready to squeak!"
MIKE D



CRASH T-SHIRT ORDER FORM

I must admit, the cool super-hype of your advertising agency has made an impression on my gullible consumerist tendencies. I give in, I want one (or more) of the new CRASH full-colour cover T-Shirts. In fact I'm so worked up about it all that I've enclosed a cheque/postal order made payable to NEWSFIELD LTD so's I can have what my heart desires . . .

I've ticked the appropriate box(es), so please send me, at £5.50 each:

☐ **RED MOON SHIRT**	**M** ☐	**XXL** ☐
☐ **EVIL EMPEROR SHIRT**	**M** ☐	**XXL** ☐
☐ **KING GRUB SHIRT**	**M** ☐	**XXL** ☐

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Address ....

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....

Postcode ....

Total payment enclosed £. . . . . Prices include postage, packing and VAT for UK Mainland. **Europe and Overseas, please add £2 per item ordered.** Please allow 28 days for delivery, although every effort will be made to send your goods before that period.

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I wish to pay by Visa/Access (delete as applicable)

Signature **Expiry Date**

Please Charge My Account No:

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CRASH T-SHIRT OFFER, PO BOX 20, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1DB.



KING GRUB SHIRT
"What's all this then? A nasty Grubby stain on my shirt – none other than the Grubbiest stain ever it's King Grub, eponymous star of our new comic-strip! May I warn you that anything I say about this brill shirt may be worn and held against you."
PAUL

GOGGLE!
VIDS TO FREEZE YOUR FRAME FOR . . .

CIC Video fronts its attack on the rental shelves with the biggest release for October, *Top Gun*, starring **Tom Cruise** (*Risky Business, Legend, The Color Of Money*) as an ambitious young fighter pilot, training at the US Navy's prestigious Fighter Weapons School. **Kelly McGillis** (*Witness*) also stars as the school's lecturer with whom Cruise becomes romantically involved.

Top Gun was the most successful video ever when released in the US late last year – but it was knocked off the Number One slot by another CIC release, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. **Matthew Broderick** (*War Games, Ladyhawke*) stars as a smooth-talking, attractive and intelligent teenager living life to the full. After convincing his best friend, Cameron, that they must borrow his father's 1961 Ferrari, he sets off with friends to tour the sights of downtown Chicago. It's on the shelves now so don't miss it.

On the same label and from the writers of *Top Gun* comes *Legal Eagles*, featuring **Robert Redford** as an Assistant District Attorney and **Debra Winger** as a competing lawyer – they combine their legal minds to solve a crime going back 15 years.

The last day of September sees **Entertainment In Video**'s release of of the comedy/horror film *House II*. The old owner has moved out (wise fellow!) but some poor fool (tempted by the low price, no doubt) moves in to take his place. **Chris Walas** (*The Fly, Gremlins*) is responsible for the scary special effects. **CBS Fox** gets ready for big business, too, with the hugely successful *Crocodile Dundee* hitting the shelves in October. So much has been said about this Australian wonder that many people have come away disappointed after all the hype – still, don't miss it. And CBS Fox also has *Peggy Sue Got Married* out for October – a sort of *Back To The Future* for 'grown-ups', starring **Kathleen Turner** (*Prizzi's Honour, Jewel In The Nile*) in the title role.

On October 12 *Nobody's Fool*, from newcomers **Sony Video Software**, reaches the shops. **Rosanna Arquette** (*Desperately Seeking Susan, After Hours*) plays the part of Cassie, torn between the lover of her chequered past (whom she stabbed in a restaurant) and her present attraction to Riley (played by **Eric Roberts** from *Runaway Train*).

Look out at the end of October for **CIC Video**'s release *The Whoopee Boys*. Two youngsters, Jake and Barney, go to finishing school to help a beautiful Palm Beach heiress gain her inheritance and marry the perfect gentlemen. With the duller months coming on it looks like there's a lot of goggle-box watching coming up to alleviate those 'exciting' new autumn TV schedules. We'll try and review as many as we can.

► *Peggy Sue Got Married*



► *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*



► *Top Gun*



AT LONG LAST SINCLAIR

ON SEPTEMBER 1 Sir Clive Sinclair's long-awaited new kneetop computer, the Z88, was put on sale in the high-street chain stores Comet and Dixons. It retails for £287.50 (batteries not included!).

'The Z88 is a fraction of the cost of its competitors, yet it is the most advanced and powerful portable computer on the market,' said Sir Clive at a press conference on September 3, finally launching the product which was first expected in the New Year.

The tiny Z88, with keyboard and screen together only the size of CRASH, comes with built-in software which includes word-processing and spreadsheet functions, a calculator program, a diary, a database, a calendar, a clock and (wait for it) BBC BASIC and assembler.

Production has started in Scotland by SCI UK, part of the American SCI corporation – the world's largest subcontractor in computer manufacturing, according to Sinclair.

SUNK!

YOU may be wondering why CRASH hasn't mentioned *Battleships* – Elite's conversion of the classic board game is grabbing covers and smash-hit reviews from *Computer & Video Games* and *Your Sinclair*.

Well, the Elite warriors decided discretion is the better part of valour and after hearing some negative comments on *Battleships* they've decided to 'sit on the game,' said Elite's Geoff Grimes.

'Until it's improved,' he added, '*Battleships* will not be released as a full-price game.' Elite's decision backs up the opinion of CRASH reviewers who saw *Battleships* before it was withdrawn.

WOT NO SEARING?

Sorry there's no Terminal Man this issue – Oli's been overworked what with three mags and next month's 3-D issue. (It takes half as much time again to paint in a third dimension . . .) But the story will be back next month, he assures us, with that Anchor In Space in full.

ET AL

PEE-ARE-MANIA

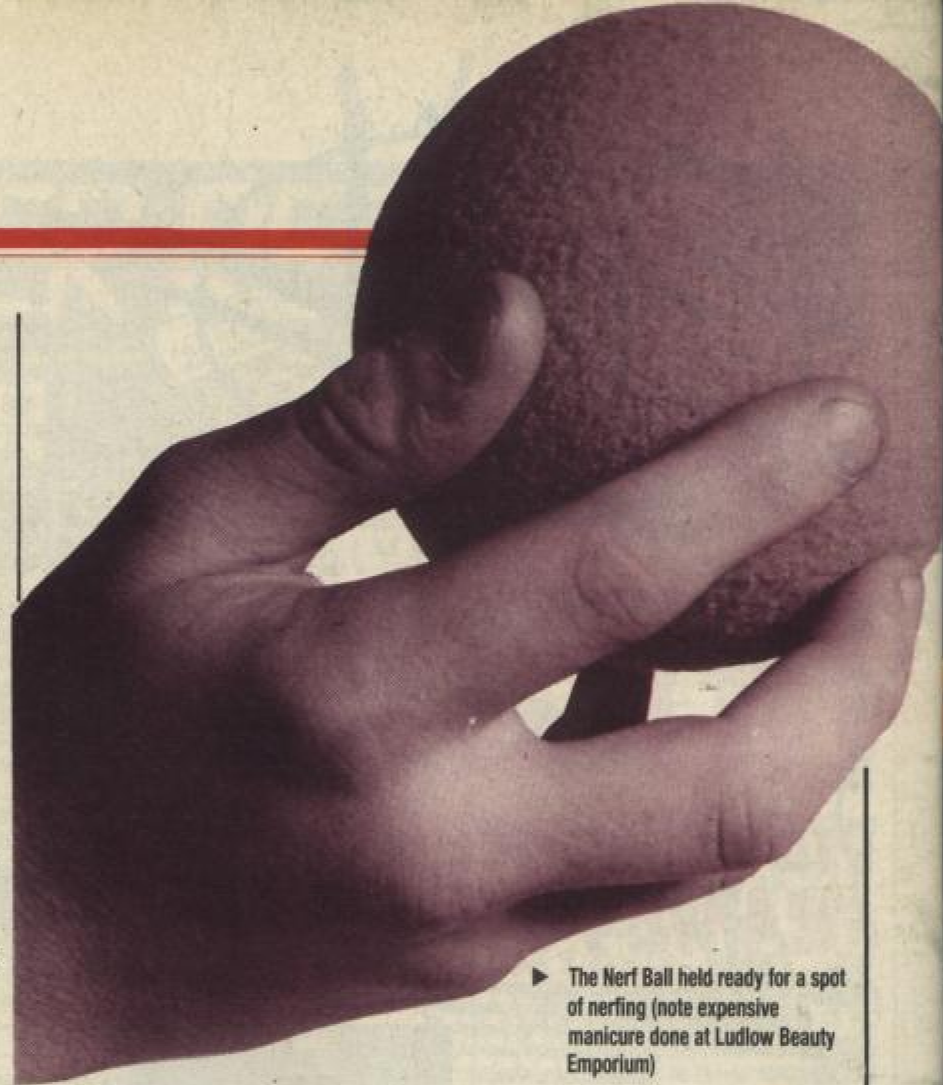
Number One in an occasional series: THE SPONGE

This is a sponge. A round green sponge sent to us by **Lesley Mansford** from **Electronic Arts**. Fine. We threw it around for a while, Roger stuck it to his computer and squeezed it occasionally, and Ricky used it to mop his brow in the sweltering heat. Pah!

After much deliberation we decided it smelt like a Heathrow departure lounge carpet. BUT seriously, viewers, after a bit of investigative journalism **Et Al** discovered that it was a **Nerf Ball** – an American Invention.

You're supposed to have hundreds in the office and whenever a Nerf Break is called for, everybody turns ga-ga and bungs them around supposedly 'to relieve pent up tension'. Unfortunately, with only one Nerf Ball, Nerf breaks aren't as jolly as they should be.

(That's enerf Nerf Balls -Ed Dir)



▶ The Nerf Ball held ready for a spot of nerfing (note expensive manicure done at Ludlow Beauty Emporium)



▶ Keep on wagglin': Konix competition winner Maris Geert in Brussels

RIDDLE OF BOFFINS' WAG BID TRAGEDY

IN a shock move that left thousands of European waggling enthusiasts shaking all over, joystick manufacturer Konix last night announced the collapse of its record-breaking Speed King after 17,604,000 waggles, *Our Waggling Editor writes.*

A shaken spokesman described the tragedy, which took place in front of 20,000 horrified holidaymakers (well, one or two bored functionaries at Konix's Welsh plant). 'It just started missing the odd click,' said Michael Baxter, 'nothing particularly phenomenal.'

But there were smiles through the tears for Belgian waggler Maris Geert, who won £100 in a competition to guess the joystick's endurance. Geert's estimate of 643 hours was off by only nine hours – the Speed King actually lasted 652 hours (more than 27 days), at 450 waggles per minute.

Said Geert: 'I had heard how durable the Speed King is, and so I worked out how long decent joysticks should last when playing *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*, doubled it – et voilà!'

Guesses at the joystick's waggling life had ranged from 14 minutes (believable of some products?) to eight years; both people who submitted those extreme estimates have been rewarded with Speed Kings, joining some half million happy Konix wagglers worldwide.

The company will release a £12.95 autofire Speed King at The *PCW* Show, and it's planning a 'beautiful new concept' in joysticks, to be launched in the New Year. Added a highly-placed source: 'We are confident that *Ed – is this plug for Konix long enough?*

BUBBLE BABBLE TOY TROUBLE

Competition ahoy! Pictured above are Ben and Ricky outside in the park playing with some odd contraption known as the **Incredibubble** from **MHI Toys**. The long pole Ben is sticking into the bubble mixture houses at its end a loop of what looks like knicker elastic. Pull back the tube on the pole, the loop opens and, hey presto! when held to the wind, it forms and releases a gigantic bubble . . .

Unfortunately the contraption could only be made to blow one measly bubble, and after spending an hour or more playing about with it we thought it had better be put to some use – so here's a wee comp.

We're not going to give away a recalcitrant bubble-maker, but you *can* win some CRASH bubble bath and a CRASH T-shirt (see page 143); send a caption for this absurdly odd photo to BUBBLES IN THE BATH, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB* to arrive no later than 25 September. Oh I'm forever blowing Bubbles . . .



▶ It's Ben and Ricky . . . but can you think of a caption? The sillier the better

FIRST DOLE-PLAYING GAME

You Are Maggie Thatcher by Hunt Emerson and Pat Mills. Published by Titan Books at £4.95

The combination of potent cartoonist Hunt Emerson and role-playing writer and one-time *2000 AD* editor Pat Mills bring a wicked sense of political humour to this first ever comic-strip adventure book. You get a chance to become North Finchley's greatest heroine, bullying, cajoling and (hardly ever) guiding Britain through crises of enormity whilst never losing sight of the real goal – your political career.

Somewhere in spirit between *Private Eye* meets Dungeons and Dragons and *Spitting Image* takes on Judge Dredd, *You Are Maggie Thatcher* is a novel experience for the politically aware role-player with an eye on Parliament. It's out on 30 October, but be warned; some of the humour may offend!

ROGER KEAN



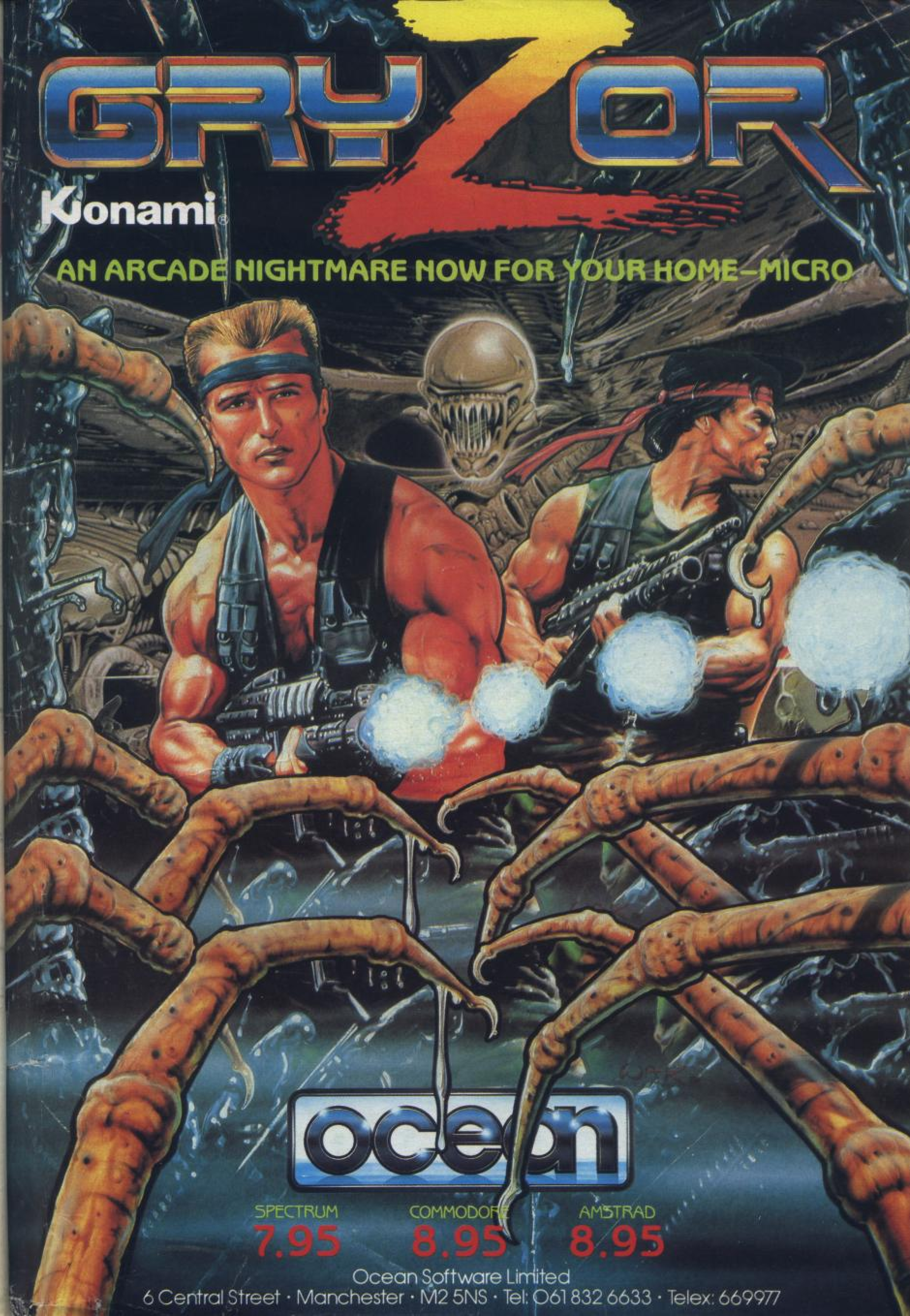
ET AL's LITERATURE COLUMN

The World's Best Computer Jokes by Rex Malik. Published by Angus & Robertson at £1.95

Having picked up *The World's Best Computer Jokes* I imagined I was in for an afternoon tittering and spluttering mouthfuls of coffee over the Spectrum at the turn of a page. But it was not to be. I can't help thinking that this book is the kind of thing Amstrad would sling in with their PC systems as a complement (if not a compliment) to the manual. Most jokes are what I would term schoolboy humour for business executives after a hard day on their IBM mainframes.

Written jokes are along the lines of 'My computer is user-friendly, but not over familiar . . .', and cartoons are in the middle-aged man sits at home computer and on the screen appears, 'Get rid of the wife' vein.

The World's Best Computer Jokes may be a nice stocking filler for Uncle Harry at Christmas in exchange for the orange Y-fronts three sizes to big he gave you last year, but don't expect any decent guffaws or any mention of the Spectrum either. **RICKY EDDY**


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